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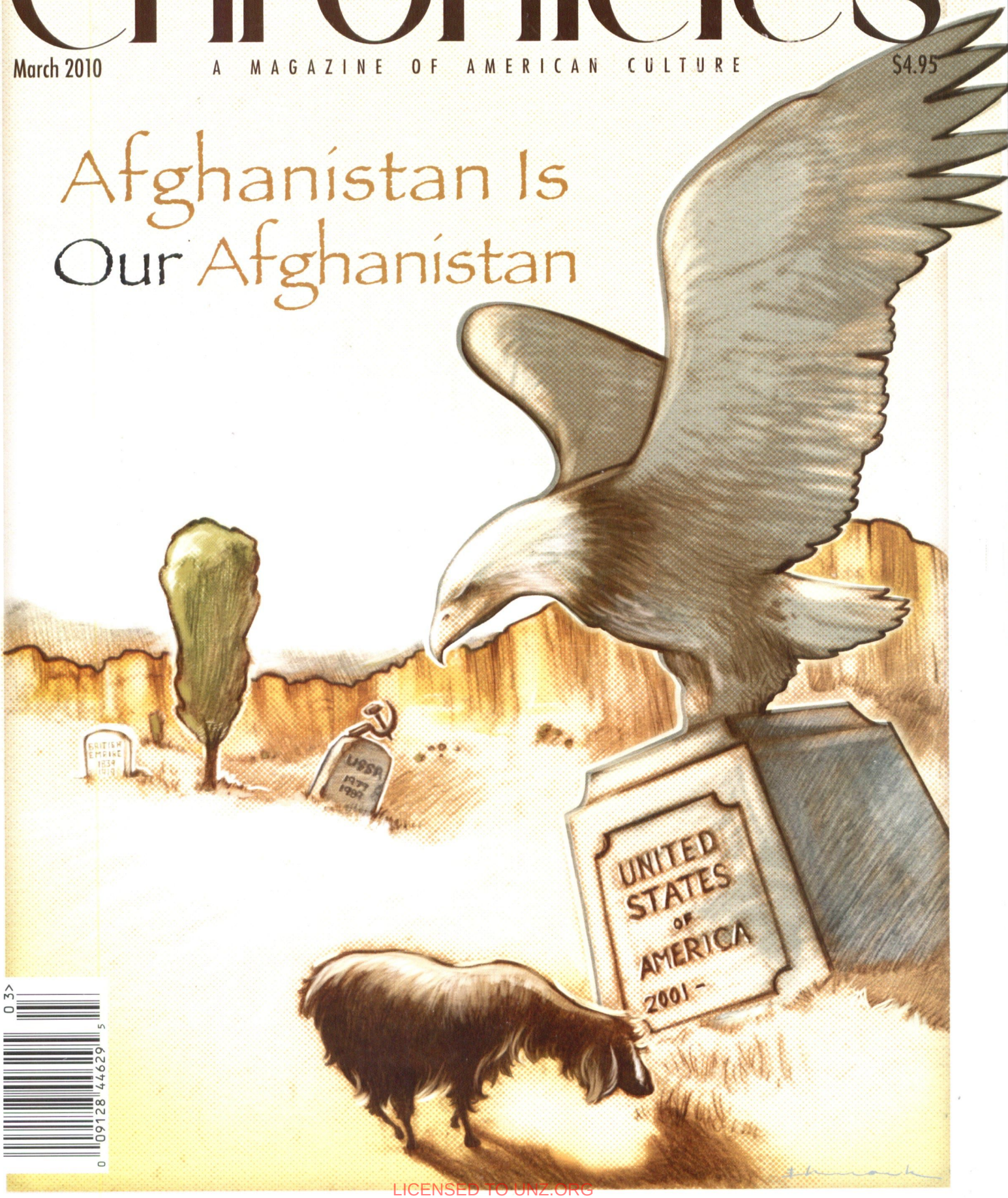

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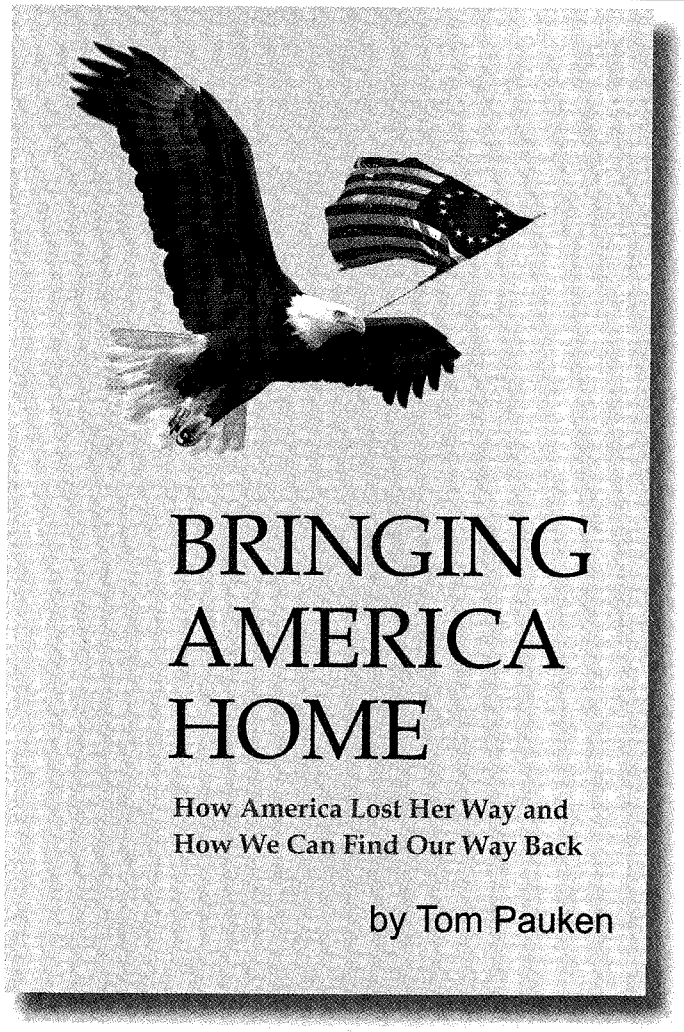

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He holds a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University and a law degree from Southern Methodist University.

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Pennies and Pounds

As a not-quite-recovered semiprofessional nitpicker, I feel compelled to point out that a 3,000-pound automobile at $15 per pound totals $45,000, and even $5 per pound totals $15,000. Out of the goodness of my heart in these tough economic times, I have a 4,000-pound 67 Ford Bronco that I'd be willing to sell to Nicole Kooistra or her cousin for a mere $4 per pound.

—Martin G. Husovich
White Haven, PA

Miss Kooistra Replies:

Mr. Husovich has caught me in an embarrassing mistake, which I'm sure will prove fodder for much office and family teasing for years to come. I wrote (*Cultural Revolutions*, January) that, thanks to Cash for Clunkers, scrap metal that used to sell for $15 per pound was going for $5. What my cousin told me in conversation—and what I completely misremembered and, worse yet, failed to catch—is that the going rate had changed from $15 to $5 per 100 pounds of metal.

Given these emended figures, I'm afraid that I will have to decline Mr. Husovich's generous offer, although I much appreciate his pointing out my mistake.

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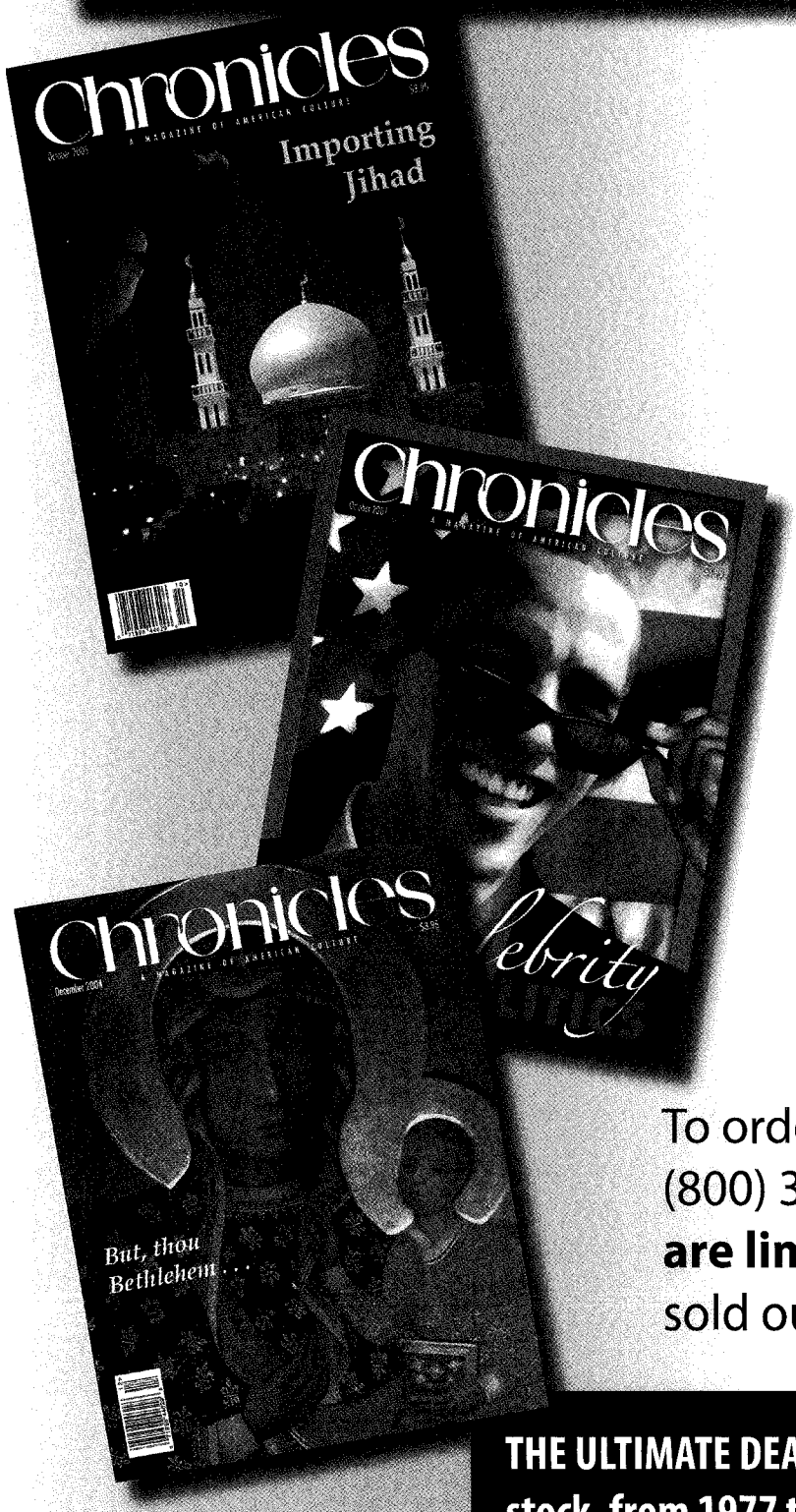

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Lost in Space

by James O. Tate

THE WORLD IS SO MESSY, and the schedule so cluttered, what with the diverse man who shot all the pitiable unarmed military servicepersons, not to mention the Winter Holiday panty-fizzle-bomber, and there was an inappropriate, unauthorized earthquake in Haiti, and yet even more entropically, there was a problem about Americans watching television, or should I say cable TV or satellite TV, because there is no more broadcast TV. You remember, the corporations bribed Congress, but, to resume: It's just so hard (and I'm talking fiendishly difficult) to schedule anything at all when everybody else has a different agenda—there are so many channels, not to mention TiVo and Netflix and YouTube and all those old DVDs. There are all the porn channels and the gay channels and the shopping channels, and, what is more, deep in the White House there was free-floating anxiety about the sensitivities of viewers who were going to watch the season premiere of ABC's *Lost*. You can't challenge the demographic of that, man! Look at the numbers! Do the math! I'm talking about the wrath of an aroused citizenry with sawed-offs and machetes and everything, if you dare even to think about preempting the season premiere of ABC's *Lost*! So the Prez postponed and rescheduled because he had finally reached the bedrock principles of the American people, which have to do with TV-watching habits. TV—it's what's for polity.

Yet the point is that watching fantasies even of embarrassing coarseness is a cogent reaction to reality rather than a fleeing or flinching from it. The ramped-up, unreal "reality show" that is *Lost* is more real than "Haiti," though to "look" at "Haiti," instead of looking at Haiti, what you get to look at is Bill Clinton, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barack H. Obama, George Clooney, and an humanitarian intervention that is composed in large part of military forces. (And by the way, I think they should change the name from "Haiti" to "Lovie"—it sets a nicer tone.) The military uniforms and aircraft contrast nicely with the words of Hollywood humanitarianism and pseudoreligiosity that have been projected. So why not take your Hollywood straight from the source, if Haiti is a bit hard to access through all the tinsel?

Look at it this way: We have a lot of wars going on, but nobody wants to watch them, so a lot of people understandably watch sports such as football—a sublimation, if it is anything, of war. Or people watch cheesy entertainment because reality, as mediated on TV, is boring, and pseudopontifical speeches by a clueless President are even more boring than unentertaining entertainment. All of that is on top. Underneath is the truth that the State of the Union is so godawful that the truth would be unbearable to utter or to hear. So since we know that the President couldn't or wouldn't tell the truth even if he knew what it was, there is no point in delivering or watching the State of the Union Address at all, except possibly in a perverse, Kremlinological sense.

Though I myself do not believe that we have actually had a Union since Lincoln declared that the Union invented the States, I would nevertheless be willing to advise BHO if I were paid double what James Carville would require, and that up front with media tie-ins. And if my demands were acceded to, I would advise BHO, or just plain BO as I call him for short, as follows: Hel-*lo*! Earth to Obama! Come in, Obama! Look, BO, you've just got to man up about this. You look like a wuss, ducking your own State of the Union Address when you haven't given a press conference in so many moons. Are you really so fizzle-pantied that you can't even name your own time to speak? Have you no confidence at all in your ability to draw the people? Oh, I see. So that's the way it is. Well, all right then. We have to adjust. I'll tell you what, BHO or BO or whatever your name is. Why don't you arrange to present a State of the Union speech on HBO? Get it? BHO does HBO! It's a natural, it has legs—trust me. I'm an expert on media ecology.

And when you get set for the BHO on HBO Prime Time Special, you really have to think about what you're going to say. Yes, substance matters. But what is it that you are not going to say? Come on, now, don't be a tease! Don't say anything about the wars, the deficits, the "budget," the healthcare fiasco, or anything about the nation, the Union, federalism, *etc.* Toss in a little spending freeze that won't change anything. Talk to them about community service, about helping the little guy, about our moral duty. Talk about the mortgages of ordinary, decent hard-working folk and how hard it is for lower-middle-class families to take care of the older generation, while trying to rear the new. That's the stuff! The State of the Union is a dream, and a dream you can believe in, because a dream is a wish your heart makes.

And by the way, BO—what's on TV? ◆

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Is Putin Returning?

By the end of 2009, the word on the Moscow grapevine was being picked up by pundits and journalists: Putin's "return" is in the works, and the premier's reoccupation of the Kremlin may take place sooner rather than later. The tandem of Vladimir Putin and his handpicked successor, Dmitri Medvedev, is said to be coming apart, unable to withstand the ambitions of its younger member to be a full-fledged president (and to be reelected in 2012), rather than continuing to play second banana to the inflated ego of Putin, jealous of his status and concerned about his future.

Premier Putin himself seemed to be signaling that he was not content to deal with technical economic problems—and that his return was very much on his mind. At his carefully managed direct-line Q&A with the Russian population in early December, Putin told one caller "don't hold your breath" waiting for him to depart the scene. (The Q&A was an annual event during Putin's presidency, so this episode was seen as a sign his presidential campaign was already under way.) He reiterated that he was considering running again in 2012 and played the traditional Russian role of the "good czar," pledging a grieving widow help in educating her children, reassuring factory workers about their jobs, and promising to "break the back" of terrorists, reprising his role as law-and-order strongman.

The direct-line performance was one of a seemingly endless parade of Putin photo-ops and encroachments on the president's turf. "Action man" Putin later displayed his prowess by throwing a judo champion in St. Petersburg, a follow-up to other tough-guy performances (flying on a fighter jet, taking a voyage on a mini-submarine to the bottom of Lake Baikal, sedating a Siberian tiger with a dart gun). And according to Kremlin sources, Putin had violated an unspoken agreement with Medvedev, taking on a major foreign-policy issue in December when he warned that Russia would respond to U.S. missile-defense plans with new offensive weaponry.

Medvedev has responded to Putin's direct-line performance with a series of public statements of his own, including some pondering his reelection. The president had already sparked the hopes of those desiring liberalization with his September article "Russia, Forward!," his annual speech to the Federal Assembly, and a number of public statements calling for "modernization," "innovation," an end to dependence on exports of raw materials (oil and natural gas, fields dominated by Putin cronies), as well as a campaign against corruption—all implicit criticisms of Putin's presidency and work as premier. Inside sources claimed friction between the Russian White House and the Kremlin last spring, with Medvedev being pressured to fire Putin cadres and install members of his lawyers/classmates clan. (Medvedev, like Putin, studied law.)

Putin had fired a warning shot in the newspaper *Russkiy Pioner,* criticizing the turnover as disruptive. Medvedev subsequently did something that Putin had been reluctant to do during his presidency: He fired high-level officials, including the head of the Moscow militia, a key post in the heavily centralized administrative system; a number of army generals, after an explosion at an arms depot; and several prison-system administrators, following the November 16 death of Hermitage Capital's Sergey Magnitsky, who was incarcerated. (Hermitage management had long been critical of the regime and had accused Ministry of Internal Affairs officials of embezzling state funds.) Meanwhile, his administration called for legal and prison reform, even as Medvedev quietly placed some of his lawyers and classmates in positions in the holy of holies of the Putin entourage, the "power departments" (law-enforcement and security agencies). Couple this with comments by Kremlin political technologist Gleb Pavlovsky that Putin should step back, since he is "obligated" to give Medvedev a chance to be a "great president," and Medvedev's audit of the state corporations (large holding firms headed by state appointees, often members of Putin's entourage), and the "collective Putin" has cause for concern.

Igor Sechin, Putin's longtime shadow, who now holds a cabinet portfolio for energy and industry, is said to be whispering in Putin's ear that Putin cannot trust Medvedev and should therefore be concerned for his future, something that could only be secured by Putin reassuming the presidency. Meanwhile, the opponents of the Putin/Sechin camp are awaiting further signals from Medvedev about his readiness to take full power, particularly the possibility of a pardon for Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former head of the Yukos Oil Company (largely absorbed by Rosneft, where Sechin serves as board chairman), now held on tax violations and undergoing a second trial on new charges. Putin is apparently alarmed—or irritated—and has publicly bashed Khodorkovsky, hinting that he is guilty of dire crimes and should remain in jail.

More telling signals are being sent over the Russian internet, where an information war appears to be in full swing. Medvedev has been the object of ridicule, with pictures circulating casting the president as weak and possibly a drunk. (One picture was a freeze-frame of Medvedev apparently stumbling at a G-8 meeting last summer; the president appears intoxicated, but a viewing of the video shows that he suffered from jet lag at most. Another, taken from behind, shows the diminutive Medvedev standing on an elevated platform to give a speech.) *Kompromat* (compromising material) accusing members of Medvedev's entourage of corruption has been making the rounds as well.

The blows directed against Medvedev have not been as nasty as the hints that

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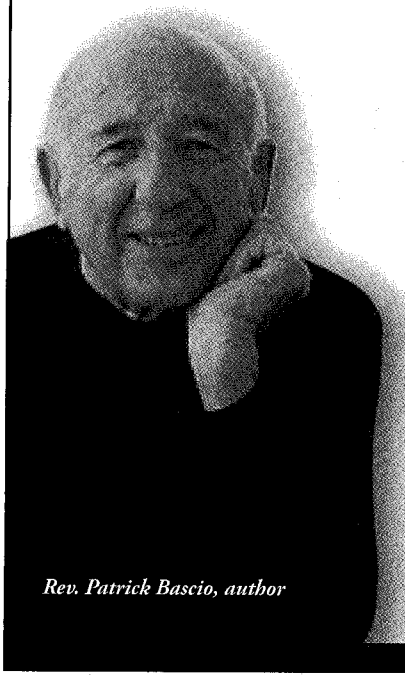
Putin is a homosexual/pedophile. (Aleksandr Litvinenko, poisoned in London in 2006, had made similar claims in August of that year.) Equally vicious are the attacks on Putin's marriage. (Ludmilla Putina is unhappy, wants a divorce, and has taken to drink. This story gained some standing after a lengthy Putina absence from public events, followed by a press interview in which, asked about happiness in family life, she commented that she did not think such a thing existed in general and that one must seek happiness inwardly.) A rumor surfaced that Putin was having a child with Olympic rhythmic gymnast Alina Kabayeva, and a report in December claimed that she had given birth to a son, leading some Moscow observers to argue that these stories were meant to counter the rumors of Putin's homosexuality and pedophilia. As a bonus, Kabayeva is half Tatar, giving candidate Putin inroads into the Muslim vote in the next presidential election.

Few believe that Medvedev has the political clout at this point to take on Putin directly, and it appears that the cautious president is being prodded to move against the collective Putin. In Russia, the intricacies of plot and counterplot make separating what is real from what is not a difficult assignment, but the evidence points to a rift in the tandem and a political battle going on under the carpet—a battle we get hints of in rumors, public remarks, media campaigns, and high-profile arrests and firings. In a country where losing a political battle might mean prison or worse, and where assassination, intimidation, and disappearances are common tools in politics and business, both the Putin and Medvedev camps have reason for concern.

—*Wayne Allensworth*

Unfettered immigration policy is harmful, dangerous, and wrong, says Fr. Patrick Bascio in his new book, *On the Immorality of Illegal Immigration: A Priest Poses An Alternative Christian View*



Rev. Patrick Bascio, author

"A rare immigration enforcement voice in the Catholic clergy"
– Brenda Walker, VDARE.com, 10/14/09

"Patrick Bascio, enriched by his theological formation and years of experience with the underprivileged, considers the ramifications of illegal immigration that we sometimes fail to see because our perspective is insufficiently broad."
– Rev. Dominique Peridans

On the Immorality of Illegal Immigration: A Priest Poses an Alternative Christian View **by Fr. Patrick Bascio (Author House 2009) 215 pages.**

Order at Amazon.com and AuthorHouse.com $16.50 postpaid. Available as an ebook: $4.95

Our Irresponsibility

IN GOOD JOURNALISTIC fashion, a *Chicago Tribune* article on Haitian adoptions ("Haitian adoptions left in limbo by earthquake," January 17) consists of heart-rending descriptions of the plight of an American woman facing the sudden problems created by the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Haiti on January 12. The woman is worried about "her 4-year-old adoptive daughter, who is HIV-positive," and who is still in Haiti. The "single mother of five finds herself stuck in an agonizing limbo, frantically trying to help the girl, who survived the massive earthquake, but unable to reach her as food, water and medications begin to run out." This woman, a 63-year-old pediatric oncologist, was only recently able to finalize the adoption, after the United States repealed a prohibition on immigrants who are HIV-positive. This story is upsetting, but not only because of the terrible situation of that little girl.

One may count the ways this incident illustrates our pervasive individual and collective lack of responsibility. The girl being adopted is four years old and therefore will require constant full-time care from a parent. She also has HIV, and thus will strain even more the health resources of the United States. Our State Department will allow her in because it has lifted the former ban on HIV-positive immigrants. One wonders what illnesses our wise government authorities will allow in next—hepatitis, malaria, tuberculosis? Apparently the Emma Lazarus poem now means that we should welcome not only the world's poor, but also the world's sick.

Perhaps our government believes we should have no problems taking care of more ill people because of the evidently limitless resources of our health system. We already allow in all sorts of illnesses, since we do not control our borders. We

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do such a poor job of controlling even legal immigration that the first case of a virulent and drug-resistant form of tuberculosis was recently detected in the United States in a Peruvian to whom an American consulate must have issued a student visa without a proper health certificate.

The adoptive mother of this four-year-old girl with HIV is 63 years old. This does not bode well for the long-term care of a sick child, since a 63-year-old mother obviously has less energy than someone younger. And this 63-year-old woman already has five children, progeny who would tax the energy of a far younger mother.

Nor is this 63-year-old woman a stay-at-home mother. She is an oncologist. (Perhaps her professional interest explains her wish to adopt an HIV-positive child.) With such a job, how much time can this mother dedicate to her five, soon to be six, children? And finally, this woman, who is 63 years old, who has five children, who has a demanding job, is single. So she will have no potential help from a spouse. Presumably she will hire people, if she doesn't already have some, to take care of the four-year-old child whose mother she is supposed to become.

Our wise government officials do not seem to have taken into account any of these factors in their decision to grant a permit for such an adoption. But should that come as any surprise?

—Dario Fernandez-Morera

Jovan Trboyevic, R.I.P.

On January 10 Jovan Trboyevic, a good friend and longtime supporter of The Rockford Institute, died at his home in Chicago at the age of 89. He will be remembered in his adopted city as a restaurateur extraordinaire who set uncompromising standards for fine dining and customer behavior. As the *Chicago Tribune* obituarist recalled, "The sort of casual incivility that we regard as a fact of life today would get you thrown out of a Trboyevic restaurant, whether it was Jovan, the restaurant he opened in 1967; the legendary Le Perroquet, which from 1973 through 1984 was arguably Chicago's finest restaurant; or Les Nomades, which he opened as a private club in 1978. . . . Tables of loud diners who couldn't rein in their exuberance were asked to leave. . . . In a famous incident involving architects who spread their blueprints across a Le Perroquet table, Trboyevic comped the meal but ordered the offenders to pack up and never return."

To establish some of the best restaurants in the Western Hemisphere was a singular feat, but Jovo's previous life story is equally worthy of a full-fledged biography. As a subaltern in the Royal Yugoslav Army, in April 1941 he evaded capture by the invading Axis forces by joining the crew of a submarine that slipped out of the Bay of Cattaro and sailed for Crete. He was transferred to Egypt, where the British—impressed by the intelligence, cool poise, and polyglot eloquence of the 21-year-old—sent him back to Yugoslavia in September 1942 to establish contact with Gen. Mihailović's Četniks.

Jovo arrived just as the Serbs' civil war was flaring up, triggered by the Communists' attempt to exploit national resistance for revolutionary goals. After a long and hazardous trek through his native country that took him from Montenegro to Serbia, Croatia, and Italian-held Dalmatia, he managed to reach Switzerland *via* Italy. His report to the British in Berne was potentially important: He knew better than anyone in the outside world the score on Tito's true motives and on the Ustaša extermination of Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. Trboyevic was powerless to impact the drift of British policy, however: It came to favor the Partisans, mainly thanks to strategically placed Communist agents in British intelligence who twisted field reports to benefit their side.

During the first decade of the Cold War, Jovan Trboyevic was a Western intelligence operative operating under a variety of covers behind the Iron Curtain. When he grew tired of what he came to see as a game for game's sake, Jovo's languages and cooking skills enabled him to live the life of a culinary nomad at top-tier hotels and on cruise lines around the world. He finally settled in Chicago, the city he loved, and married Meggie Abbott, his wife of 42 years, who outlives him.

We spoke just before Christmas, and he asked me to lunch the following week. I told him I'd be out of town but took a rain check for mid-January. We agreed that it would be high time for us to start recording his life story on tape—something we had planned to do for years. It was not to be.

That story is worthy of a Hollywood script. Its protagonist was a witty and generous man who loved life, even though he took a dim view of the ways of the modern world. Above all Jovo Trboyevic was a gentleman *par excellence*, perhaps the last of his kind. May God rest his soul.

—Srdja Trifkovic

Obiter Dicta

Our poet this month is **Timothy Murphy**. His collections of poetry include *The Deed of Gift* (Story Line Press) and *Very Far North* (Between the Lines). Over 30 of his poems have been published in the pages of *Chronicles*.

Our cover and some interior art are provided by **Eric Hancock** (*eric-hancock.com*). Mr. Hancock, a Wisconsin native, holds a BFA in illustration from the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design.

"Gordon Brown Davos 2008" (p. 37) is the work of flickr user World Economic Forum. It is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

The illustration on page 47 is by Shawn Kelley. **Mr. Kelley**, the founder of *Wall-Blank.com*, lives in Rockford, Illinois.

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Divide and Conquer

> I have seen a great deal of your government since I came to India. Your forts, your arsenals, your ships, all are admirable. I have been down to Calcutta, and have been astonished with your wealth, your palaces, your marts, and your mint; but to me the most wonderful thing of all is that so wise and wealthy a nation could have ever entertained the project of occupying such a country as Kabul, where there is nothing but rocks and stones.

With these words, Amir Dost Mahammad bade farewell to the governor general of India at the end of the First Afghan War. Mahammad had spent much of his life fighting to preserve his kingdom. His elder brother, Fatteh Khan, had been assassinated by Mahmud Shah Durrani, the very ruler of Afghanistan he had restored to his throne. As the leaders of the Barakzai tribe, Fatteh Khan's brothers had to seek vengeance. They drove Mahmud from his throne and parceled out his territories among themselves. Mahammad received Ghazni, to which he later added Kabul, but his troubles had only begun.

These Pashtun rulers had powerful enemies and rivals. Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of Punjab, seized Peshawar, an important fortress town that Mahammad had to recover, but in asserting his right and defending his territory, he involved himself in a struggle among far greater powers. These were the years of the Great Game between Russia and Britain over control of the region. Mahammad, though he was courted by Russia, preferred Britain. The British governor general, however, instructed Mahammad that to receive British assistance, he had to surrender control over his foreign policy to Britain, but, in return, the only help the British offered was the dubious protection of Ranjit Singh himself. In the inevitable war they had provoked, the British defeated the Afghans, and Mahammad himself surrendered in 1840.

Defeat and political decapitation were not enough to secure control over the country. When the First Afghan War ended in 1842 with the treacherous destruction of a British force that numbered (including civilians) 16,000, Amir Dost Mahammad was permitted to return to the people he ruled. It was on that occasion that he expressed his bewilderment to the governor general.

Colonel Malleson began his *History of Afghanistan* (1879) with this anecdote, because he wished to explain to his British readers why "this country of rocks and stones" had "an importance beyond its territorial value." Malleson had some explaining to do, since Britain was already fighting the second of three wars over Afghanistan. In the Second Afghan War (1878-80), which ended with the defeat of Ayub Khan, Mahammad's grandson, the British were, indeed, victorious. They had also learned (or rather remembered) at least one lesson. Ayub Khan had besieged Kandahar, until he was routed by General Roberts. Ayub was not the actual ruler of Afghanistan, and when his uncle the amir died at the end of the war, the British installed another nephew, Abdur Rahman Khan, as their puppet. Ayub Khan again attacked and seized Kandahar, but the amir, at the head of an army from Kabul, retook the city. These divisions—always encouraged by the British—made it easier to defeat the Afghans in the short run, though foreign occupation or domination would ultimately unify the country against the invaders. Once in power, even Abdur Rahman proved to be a wily diplomatist who effectively kept his country independent of Britain. If quiet was what the British wanted, they got it, but if they thought they had gained the friendship of the Afghan nation, they were sadly mistaken, as the Third Afghan War was to prove.

After the Second Afghan War, Britain once again took over Afghan foreign policy, but this time wisely paid the amir a subsidy and left him in peace. In the Third Afghan War (1919), the British were able to repel an Afghan attack, and the RAF inflicted great damage on Afghan cities, but British forces suffered greater losses than the Afghans, and the net result was a decline in British influence. I wonder what Colonel Malleson would have said about these conflicts, as Britain was abandoning her empire in India after World War II?

Are there any lessons to be learned from the British experience or, more broadly, from Afghan history, that can be applied to the current debacle? Some are obvious, and the Russians had to learn them the hard way. One lesson of experience is that it is easier to conquer Afghanistan than it is to hold her. It is usually possible to bribe

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one set of natives ("friendlies") to fight their enemies, on Julius Caesar's principle of *divide et impera*, "divide and rule." Unfortunately, the English mistranslation of Caesar's dictum, as "divide and conquer," has proved to be more accurate for modern empires that find places like Somalia or Afghanistan easy to conquer but impossible to rule. The peoples (note the plural) of Afghanistan are violent and quarrelsome, but today they are in basic agreement in hating their American conquerors. *E pluribus unum.*

THE WORD *AFGHANISTAN*, which refers to a region and not to a nation, is a great stumbling block to any would-be overlord. Indeed, the whole mistake of the current American operation may be said to derive from the delusion that there is any such nation as Afghanistan. Anyone who has even the slightest familiarity with the political geography of Afghanistan—and that is all I claim for myself—will realize that the region is the product of a series of ethnic and religious eruptions from all points of the compass. In the earliest days, it seems, it was a cultural extension of the Indus River Valley that winds through what is now Pakistan. When the invading tribes that spoke dialects of Indo-Iranian came bursting in, some entered the Indian subcontinent, while others went to Iran. Afghanistan, so far as I can tell, became a continuum of Indo-Iranian dialects and cultures, though the Iranian element would have become more dominant under the empire of the Medes and Persians. When Alexander the Great conquered Bactria, that name was applied to a region encompassing northern Afghanistan and the neighboring "stans" to the north. When Afghans speak of their glorious ancient past and claim Zoroaster as a native son, they are really boasting of the fact that they were subjects of the Persian Empire.

When Alexander's successors wisely withdrew, the region was taken over by the Mauryan dynasty, which ruled a Hindu empire that came to include most of the subcontinent. As the Mauryan Empire dissolved, the territory that is today Afghanistan fell under the control of Parthians and then the mysterious Kushan Empire, followed by the Sassanid Persians. As the Sassanian Empire crumbled, the region broke down into local fiefdoms until the Arab conquest of Persia exposed the land to Islamic conquest, a process completed by the Ghaznavid dynasty in the 11th century. The Ghaznavids themselves were of Turkic origin, though they became thoroughly Persianized in language and culture. At the height of their power, they ruled much of India, on which they imposed Islam. It is usual to say that the Ghaznavids, alien though they were, more or less created Afghanistan, but the reality is rather more complex. Afghan cities were the center of an empire ruled by a Turkic dynasty and dominated by Persian culture. A better claim might be made for their successors, the Ghorids, an Iranian people who ruled over Afghanistan and parts of Iran and the subcontinent.

The Iran-India axis has been dominant in much of the region's history, but there is another, which might be called the Turkic-Mongol axis. Ghaznavid rulers were preoccupied with fighting off the Seljuq Turks, and both they and the Ghorids' successors, another Turkic clan, were overwhelmed in the 13th century by the Mongol Empire of Genghis Khan and his Turkic allies. Some of this history is embedded in the form of the Turkic Uzbeks and Turkmeni who inhabit Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and parts of Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

AFGHANISTAN IS NOT A NATION, much less a nation-state. It is an endless civil war, alternately lapsing into a cold, or blowing up into a hot, war. It is one Pashtun tribe against another, Pashtun against Uzbeks and Iranians, and Uzbeks against Iranians, old guard corrupt *mujahideen* against idealistic Taliban, and, overall, Shia against Sunni. I know too little about the place to speak with any more authority than the CIA experts who permitted a Jordanian triple agent to blow them up, but even that little is more than I wish to know. Returning veterans have said they find our Afghan "allies" as revolting as our enemies, and, from what I can gather, pedophilia and homosexual rape are routine pastimes, like bowling or having a beer with your buddies in the good old U.S.A. One friend told me he went to bed each night and woke up each morning with but one thought: "I don't want to have my legs blown off for these people."

Military men have told me that General McChrystal is an excellent officer, but his job—subduing Afghanistan—is not only impossible: It is not worth the doing. Two misinformed and ignorant American presidents have sent their countrymen to die in the rocks and stones of Kabul, protecting the right of child-molesting warlords to grow the opium that is poisoning the soul of Europe and America. Yes, we shall lose face in withdrawing. This is something that Messrs. Cheney and Rumsfeld might have thought about before going in, something that President Obama's advisors might have considered before beefing up the mission. So far the government admits that our own First Afghan War has cost about $300 billion and 1,000 lives. The whole of Afghanistan is not worth a red cent to the American people, much less the life of one American helicopter pilot. It is time to cut and run. ◆

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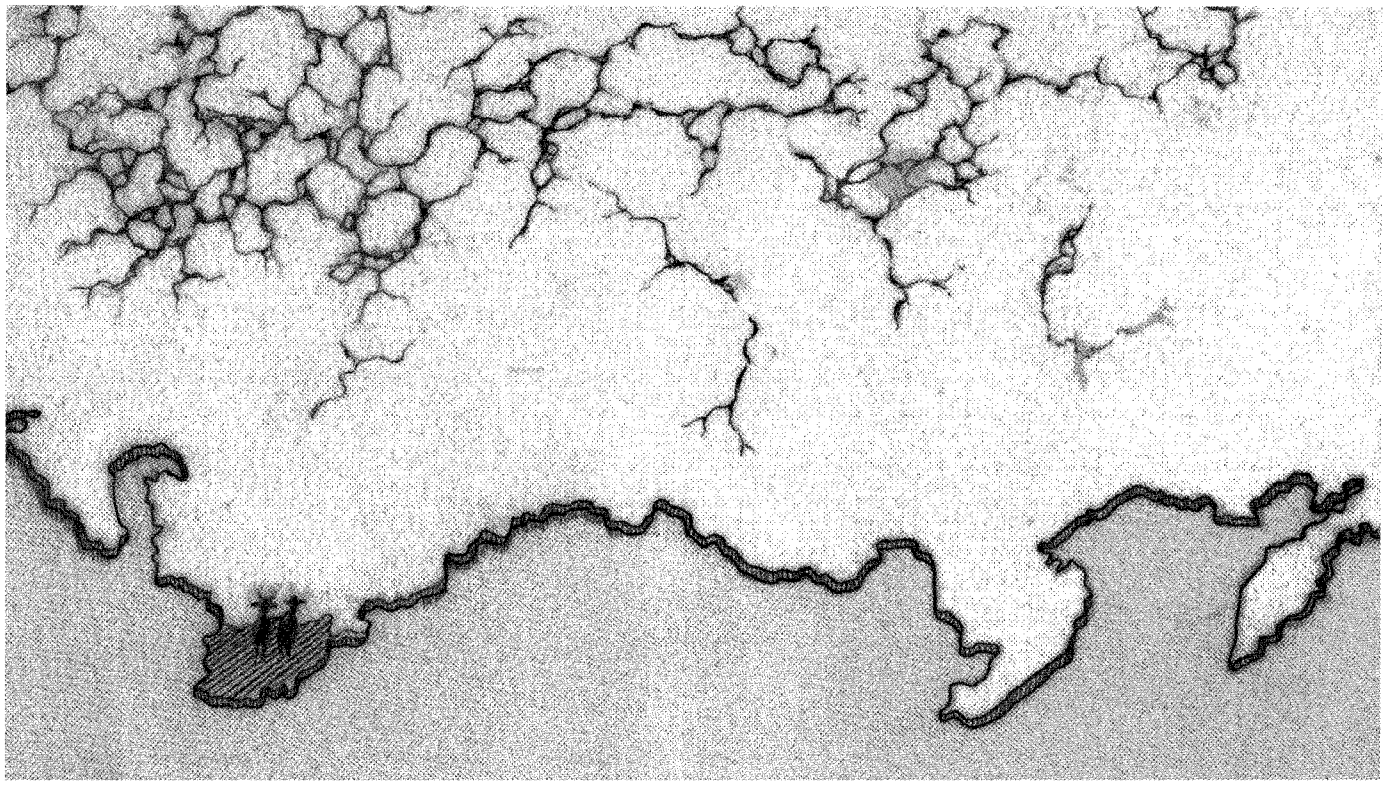

Eric Hancock

The Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan

by Srdja Trifkovic

Hoping to bolster its geopolitical position, a great power sends troops to Afghanistan and installs a puppet leader. That leader has little authority with the influential tribal chieftains and insufficient means to buy their complicity. Resistance soon grows into a full-blown insurgency, which leads to harsh reprisals by the occupying forces. The vicious circle becomes untenable, the great power withdraws in ignominy, and Afghanistan reverts to its usual state of Hobbesian premodernity.

That, in short, is the story not only of the Soviet invasion started on Christmas Day 1979, but of the British intervention known as the First Afghan War (1839-42). After two miserable years, 16,000 soldiers and camp followers retreated from Kabul in January 1842; only one British survivor made it back alive. Scottish poet Thomas Campbell left the war's fitting epitaph:

> Few, few shall part, where many meet!
> The snow shall be their winding-sheet,
> And every turf beneath their feet
> Shall be a soldier's sepulchre.

Another British intervention came four decades later, when this same land was seen as central to the security of the Raj amid the ongoing "Great Game" in Central Asia. The Second Afghan War is remembered, if at all, through Kipling's grim verses:

> When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's
> plains,
> And the women come out to cut up what remains,
> Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains
> An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.

The Soviet intervention repeated all of the British mistakes of 1839, but the consequences were more serious. The ensuing war in Afghanistan did not "cause" the collapse of the Soviet Union any more than the assassination of

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Archduke Franz Ferdinand "caused" World War I, but it revealed and exacerbated major structural weaknesses. Over half a million impressionable young men did tours of duty and, like their counterparts in Vietnam, came to believe that politicians got them into a quagmire but denied them the means to win. Last December, the *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* marked the 30th anniversary of what it called a "large-scale military operation the goal of which was a mystery to all." Neither the Politburo nor the military had a clear set of objectives, the *Gazeta* wrote, let alone an exit strategy. In *The Great Gamble*, former NPR Moscow correspondent Gregory Feifer gives credence to the claim of a Soviet general staff officer that "no one ever actually ordered the invasion of Afghanistan"—it happened through inertia and the confusion of the sclerotic Soviet leadership.

In the decade before the invasion, Moscow's influence in Afghanistan was steadily growing, at the modest cost of a few infrastructure projects. After four decades of uneventful rule, King Mohammed Zahir Shah was dethroned in a 1973 coup by his cousin and former prime minister Mohammed Daoud, who abolished the monarchy. Unlike the ineffective king, President Daoud was a despot intolerant of any dissent. While continuing to receive economic aid and arms from the Soviets, he clamped down on the small but influential pro-Moscow People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. In April 1978, after one of its leaders was killed, the PDPA temporarily overcame its factional squabbles and colluded with sympathetic army officers to stage a coup. Daoud and his family were killed, and Afghanistan became a "democratic republic" under PDPA secretary-general Nur Muhammad Taraki.

What followed was a compressed Marxist version of the shah's experiment in neighboring Iran, minus the petrodollars: massive modernization imposed on a society steeped in Islamic tradition. Within months a series of decrees abolished traditional *sharia* practices such as arranged marriages and polygamy, banned usury (endemic in the villages), and mandated school attendance for girls. The local village elite, Muslim clergy and landowners, were treated with disdain or outright hostility. Young PDPA activists, mainly students, were sent into the countryside to "reeducate" the people.

Then came an ambitious agrarian reform program and the cancellation of farmers' debts to landowners. Although meant to benefit them, such measures could not buy the support of mainly illiterate peasants whose worldview was founded on village traditions accentuated by Islam and an historic hatred of foreigners. Those same measures caused dismay among the powerful landowners and tribal leaders, who were not offered a compensating stake in the new order. In the summer of 1978 the Nuristani elders started a rebellion in eastern Afghanistan, invoking Allah against Taraki's "infidel" regime. When Taraki was killed in a palace coup by his PDPA rival Hafizullah Amin, it made no difference. The insurgency soon spread to other ethnic groups. The government executed captured rebels and suspected sympathizers, but the army rank and file proved unreliable. As tens of thousands of soldiers deserted or joined the rebels, Kabul appealed to Moscow for military assistance.

Starting in early 1979 the Soviets provided military advisors, helicopter pilots, tank drivers, and presidential guards, but Moscow was reluctant to commit large regular units. The U.S. decision in July 1979 to arm the rebels may have forced the Kremlin's hand. As President Jimmy Carter's national-security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, said in a 1998 interview, "According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the mujahideen began during 1980, that is to say, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan . . . [b]ut the reality, secretly guarded until now, is completely otherwise." The goal of the policy, he said, was to provoke a Soviet military response: "We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would." On the day the Soviets officially crossed the border, a delighted Brzezinski wrote to Carter, "We now have the opportunity of giving to the Soviet Union its Vietnam War."

The Soviets were concerned that President Amin was losing control. The KGB residents in Kabul warned that his "harsh repressions" would consolidate the opposition, and his reliability as an ally of Moscow was becoming uncertain. The original Soviet objective appears to have been no more than a change of leadership and a temporary presence while the client Afghan army reasserted government authority in rebel areas. Amin was killed by Soviet special forces on the first day of the operation; Kabul radio announced that the country was "liberated" from his misrule; and one of the PDPA's founders, Babrak Karmal, was flown in from Prague to take over. Kabul was quickly secured, but the provinces were another story.

First, the Soviet army was not prepared for an anti-insurgency role. Its doctrine, tactics, training, and order of battle were predicated on a war against NATO forces on the plains of northern Central Europe. Fighting an elusive enemy in an unfriendly terrain and without a clear set of objectives, the Soviets invariably achieved tactical successes but failed to translate them into strategic gains. In the 19th century the czarist army fought effective counterin-

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surgencies in Central Asia and in the Caucasus; a century later, those old skills needed to be relearned and a new combat doctrine developed. By the mid-1980's specially trained air-assault and Spetsnaz forces had the skills, but it was too late to compensate for the absence of doctrine.

Second, the *mujahideen* had supply bases and sanctuaries in Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, Iran, which provided them with logistic and moral support. Assured of Western backing, they felt that they could not lose—short of the Soviets engaging enormous forces and chasing them across Afghanistan's southern, eastern, and western borders, which was diplomatically out of the question. External support coupled with traditional martial spirit, hatred of foreigners, and invocation of Islam provided a steady influx of motivated recruits to different "Muj" groups all over the country. Those groups remained fragmented and tribal, but they could not be defeated in detail. Pacification of one area usually coincided with a fresh flare-up in another, previously "pacified" area. The decentralized nature of the *mujahideen* meant that there was no way a massive concentration of superior Soviet forces could secure a decisive outcome.

Third, the Soviet Union was no longer as indifferent to the outside world's disapproval as Khrushchev had been in October 1956, when he crushed the Hungarian revolution. The U.S.-led boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics was psychologically more effective than many Americans realized. In Brezhnev's dotage the Soviet leadership lacked the ruthlessness and singularity of purpose it had displayed in 1968 in Czechoslovakia. The Kremlin's reluctance to allow the army to use indiscriminate reprisals would have seemed quaint, as well as treasonous, to Stalin.

Fourth, in spite of the Soviet regime's control of the media and public discourse, no domestic consensus on the war could be constructed. Long used to communicating its foreign policies in terms of Marxist dogma—"internationalist duty," "response to foreign aggression," *etc.*—the Kremlin could not bring itself to present the intervention in simple geopolitical terms: that having a friendly regime in Afghanistan, in the southern backyard of the Soviet Union, was a prerequisite for national security, justifying all associated sacrifices. Had it done so, the public (in the Soviet Union's Slavic heartland, at least) might have responded more favorably.

Fatally for the Soviets, the political solution was impossible. Babrak Karmal did reverse some of the contentious policies of his doctrinaire predecessors, invoked the name of Allah in his speeches, replaced the irritating red flag introduced by Taraki with the traditional Afghan tricolor, and released thousands of political prisoners. Nothing worked: Installed by foreigners and dependent on them, he was fatally tainted. The same applied to his more ruthless successor, Mohammad Najibullah, who took over with Soviet approval in 1986. He was able to retain limited control for a couple of years after the completion of the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, but his long-term fate was sealed.

The most enduring legacy of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is the growth of political Islam and jihadist terrorism as a global phenomenon, but the decision to turn militant Islam into a policy tool was made in Washington. In his now-famous interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur* in January 1998, Zbigniew Brzezinski was asked if he had any regrets about the consequences of his policies:

> B: Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea. . . . Indeed, for almost ten years, Moscow had to carry on an unsupportable conflict that brought about the demoralization and finally the breakup of the Soviet empire.
>
> Q: And neither do you regret having supported the Islamic fundamentalism, giving arms and advice to future terrorists?
>
> B: What matters more to world history, the Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?
>
> Q: Some stirred-up Moslems? But isn't Islamic fundamentalism a world menace today?
>
> B: Nonsense! . . . There is no global Islam.

The rest, as they say, is history. Let us end by noting the almost hysterical exaggeration in Brzezinski's conceited claim. Afghanistan was not the graveyard of the Soviet system. Most fighting was Afghan on Afghan: The Soviet commitment was limited; the casualties (15,000 killed in combat) were not very serious on an annual basis and certainly not regime-threatening. The Afghan blunder was expensive and bad for military morale, but not fatal. It is more reasonable to assert that all the conviction had leached out of the Kremlin well before Brezhnev was dead. The Soviet Union was the husk of a dying system before a single Soviet soldier crossed the Afghan border.

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Eric Hancock

From Good War to Bad Social Engineering

by Doug Bandow

The United States has been at war in Afghanistan for more than eight years. That is longer than our involvement in both world wars combined. Yet the end of the conflict appears to be further away than ever. It is not even clear what would constitute victory.

Afghanistan began as the "good war," receiving near-unanimous backing in the United States and similar support in Europe. The objectives were clear: weaken or destroy Al Qaeda, which had attacked America; oust the Taliban, which had given Al Qaeda refuge; warn other regimes that cooperating with terrorists would leave them out of power.

The United States quickly achieved all these objectives. Al Qaeda is a shell of its former self. It is not certain that Osama bin Laden is still alive; much of the organization's leadership has been killed. Al Qaeda now appears to be mostly effective as an inspiration to other jihadist groups. Moreover, Afghanistan is largely irrelevant to Al Qaeda's operations. National Security Advisor Jim Jones recently claimed that there are only 100 Al Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan and that they have "no bases, no ability to launch attacks on either us or our allies." The underwear bomber, linked to Nigeria and Yemen, illustrates the limited relevance of Afghanistan to terrorism these days.

The United States also succeeded in driving the Taliban from power. Whatever happens in the future, Washington punished the regime that hosted Al Qaeda. Even if the Taliban returns to power in some provinces or in Kabul, many Taliban leaders appear less than well disposed to an organization that misused their hospitality and caused their ouster. Even a victorious Taliban is likely to be a chastened Taliban, hesitant to host terrorists seeking to strike America.

Finally, the United States has sent a very clear message to any other regime tempted to aid anti-American terrorists: Do so at your peril. Washington might not have the knowledge, wisdom, or commitment to spread democracy, impose liberal values, and otherwise transform society, but we still can and will punish any government foolish

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enough to assist those who attack us.

Having met these objectives, Washington could have withdrawn, demonstrating how (limited) military action can effectively combat terrorism. Such an outcome would have yielded a more secure America, although not necessarily a more democratic Afghanistan.

The intervening eight years have not been cheap. The conflict has consumed roughly 900 U.S. and 600 allied lives and cost about $220 billion, with nearly another $100 billion budgeted for this year alone, inflated by President Obama's ongoing escalation. The Afghan people, too, have suffered greatly, with tens of thousands of dead and injured civilians.

The return on this investment has been poor. Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, says the situation in Afghanistan is "deteriorating." Taliban attacks on allied forces are up; secure areas are down. The Afghan government exercises little control over most of the country. The most vibrant industry may be drugs, which fund friends, including high government officials, and foes alike. Vote-rigging by President Hamid Karzai wrecked any pretension that we are promoting democracy.

So what now?

A NARROW FOCUS on counterterrorism would be no cakewalk, but it might be achievable at a reasonable cost. This approach would accept that Afghanistan is a tragically fractured land, poor and at war. The embarrassing Karzai government could be accepted with equanimity. After all, if Mr. Ten Percent can be president of the far more important nation of Pakistan, Mr. Dubious Democracy can reign in Kabul.

The United States could look for a political accommodation, with some mixture of Taliban and local warlords willing to deny Al Qaeda sanctuary. The bulk of American forces could be withdrawn over time. Should terrorists attempt to return to Afghanistan, use of Special Forces and drones in combination with friendly local forces could minimize their effectiveness.

Terrorism will never disappear, but focusing on counterterrorism might at least thwart future terrorist attacks. Said President Obama when he announced his Afghan policy, "Our overarching goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda . . . "

Still, nation-building seems to beckon U.S. policymakers. In March 2009, the President agreed to send another 21,000 troops to Afghanistan, explaining, "For the Afghan people, a return to Taliban rule would condemn their country to brutal governance, international isolation, a paralyzed economy, and the denial of basic human rights to the Afghan people—especially women and girls."

A Taliban victory would be bad for the Afghan people, but so far America's attempt to establish nirvana in Kabul, let alone the rest of the country, has fallen far short. Malalai Joya, a woman oft-threatened by traditionalists for running for parliament, has complained, "Your governments have replaced the fundamentalist rule of the Taliban with another fundamentalist regime of warlords." But should defeating the Taliban be Washington's business?

While there are many reasons to sympathize with the Afghan people, humanitarian sentiments do not constitute our national interest. David Ignatius of the *Washington Post* criticized those who would adopt "a more selfish counterterrorism strategy that drops the rebuilding part," but it is easy to be generous with other people's lives when you are fighting from your office chair in your ivory tower. The lives and wealth of Americans should not be sacrificed for costly grand crusades irrelevant to American security.

Some believe that Washington needs to finish the job it began in Afghanistan. Masuda Sultan of Women for Afghan Women argued, "We have a moral obligation to continue to follow through for Afghan women who have put themselves at risk over the last eight years."

Foreign intervention no doubt encourages other peoples to count on the U.S. government, often with costly consequences. However, that does not turn foreign social engineering into a U.S. priority. There is a good argument for welcoming to America those who have risked their lives on her behalf; Iraqi translators come to mind. But this is not the first time, unfortunately, that foreign peoples have shared the unrealistic hopes of U.S. policymakers to transform impoverished, traditional, and war-ravaged societies into free and prosperous countries.

FINALLY, WHAT OF THE MEANS about which the President spoke? If fixing Afghanistan is America's goal, is it possible to achieve? And at what cost?

Here the President's policy most obviously breaks down. Killing terrorists is easy compared to remaking societies.

Unfortunately, it appears that the administration has taken the worst path possible. Instead of folding or going all in, it is attempting to stay in the game with a slight escalation. General McChrystal wanted at least 40,000 additional troops; President Obama agreed to 30,000. Depending on how many the Europeans actually contribute—undoubtedly fewer than they have promised—the United States and her allies will have around 125,000 personnel in Afghanistan, a country of 33 million peo-

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ple scattered among thousands of villages, many located in forbidding mountainous or otherwise desolate terrain. That is not nearly enough.

Traditional counterinsurgency doctrine indicates that about 660,000 troops are needed. The Soviets ultimately deployed 118,000 troops, too few to impose Moscow's will. The NATO nations initially used 60,000 soldiers to garrison Bosnia—after all fighting had ceased in that much smaller and less populous land.

Despite all of that, could the Obama administration's policy somehow work? Most analysts who advocate an increased effort in Afghanistan believe that we must start with an effective regime in Kabul.

Rahm Emanuel spoke of creating "a credible Afghan partner for this process that can provide the security and the type of services that the Afghan people need." Former Defense Department official Marin Strmecki argued for establishing "an effective and representative government." The Center for American Progress issued a report advocating "a national representative government that is able to govern, defend, and sustain itself."

One cannot say, given the range of human experience, that such an objective is unachievable. However, the likelihood of success seems slim at best.

Afghanistan has often been called the "graveyard of empires"—a cliché, perhaps, but foreign powers have never successfully ruled the Afghan people. While internal conflict is not inevitable, any central government must, like the mid-20th-century Afghan monarchy, understand and respect both the decentralized, traditional nature of Afghan society and the sharp limits on its own power.

Intervention from outside, even by a power with greater understanding of and respect for local cultures than the United States, is inevitably more difficult. Afghanistan is made up of 20 often antagonistic ethnic groups. The dominant Pashtuns are divided into 50 tribes. While many urban people seek modernity, many other Afghans remain hostile to outsiders, especially foreigners carrying guns. Three decades of war have profoundly afflicted Afghan society.

Some advocates of war appear to believe that what is desirable must, by definition, be practical. Max Boot of the Council on Foreign Relations argued,

> Poor governance is an argument for, not against, a troop surge. Only by sending more personnel, military and civilian, can President Obama improve the Afghan government's performance, reverse the Taliban's gains and prevent Al Qaeda's allies from regaining the ground they lost after 9/11.

Boot's claim is curious, to put it politely. Having failed to create an effective government and suppress insurgents after eight years of war, Washington must do more of the same, Boot says, in the hope of achieving a different result. Maybe escalation is the only way, in theory, in which the Obama administration can improve the performance of the Karzai regime. But theories do not always work in practice.

This is no knock on America's forces. Matthew Hoh, a former Marine who resigned from the State Department after spending time in Afghanistan, contended that no "military force has ever been tasked with such a complex, opaque and Sisyphean mission as the U.S. military has received in Afghanistan."

Liberty, prosperity, democracy, and stability may eventually come to Afghanistan, but only through the efforts of the Afghan people. Any system imposed from outside is bound to have limited credibility, stability, and longevity.

Washington should adjust its policy ends and military means. Its principal objective should be protecting Americans. That means cooperating with friendly local forces, utilizing Special Forces, employing limited drone and air strikes, drying up terrorist funding, sharing intelligence, and otherwise cooperating with friendly states. It does not mean building states and nations where none exist.

In 2002 Illinois state senator Barack Obama warned against fighting a war "without a clear rationale and without strong international support," and argued that an invasion of Iraq would yield "a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, and with unintended consequences." Unfortunately, that appears to be the current scenario in Afghanistan.

President Obama still has time to reconsider his course. If he does not, Afghanistan is likely to define his presidency as Iraq does that of George W. Bush and Vietnam that of Lyndon B. Johnson.

Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. A former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan, he is the author of several books, including Foreign Follies: America's New Global Empire *(Xulon).*

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The Graveyard of Empires

by Janek C. Kazmierski

On September 10, 2009, Matthew Hoh resigned from his post as the senior State Department official in the Zabul Province of Afghanistan. In his resignation letter, he wrote in part,

> I have lost understanding of and confidence in the strategic purposes of the United States' presence in Afghanistan. . . . Our forces, devoted and faithful, have been committed to conflict in an indefinite and unplanned manner that has become a cavalier, politically expedient and Pollyannaish misadventure. . . . Success and victory, whatever they may be, will be realized not in years, after billions more spent, but in decades and generations.

In his penultimate paragraph, Hoh notes, "We are mortgaging our Nation's economy on a war, which, even with increased commitment, will remain a draw for years to come."

The Obama plan, unveiled December 1, 2009, after months of deliberation, answered few of the concerns expressed in Hoh's letter. The President announced, "as Commander-in-Chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan." However, the national interest has an expiration date: The troops will begin to return home after 18 months. Leaders in the United States and abroad are questioning Obama's strategy for a "war of necessity" that requires a complex political, social, and military situation to be resolved in such a short period. "A withdrawal date only emboldens Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, while dispiriting our Afghan partners and making it less likely that they will risk their lives to take our side in this fight," said Sen. John McCain. Hamid Karzai's chief policy advisor stated, "We couldn't solve the Afghanistan problem in eight years, but now the U.S. wants to solve it in 18 months?"

President Obama anticipated such criticism:

> The absence of a time frame for transition would deny us any sense of urgency in working with the Afghan government. It must be clear that Afghans will have to take responsibility for their security, and that America has no interest in fighting an endless war in Afghanistan.

He concluded, "America—we are passing through a time of great trial. And the message we send in the midst of these storms must be clear: that our cause is just, our resolve unwavering."

The Obama plan is a carefully brokered response to the alarming assessment that the President received in August from his handpicked commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal. McChrystal began his report by noting, "many indicators suggest the overall situation is deteriorating." He identified two primary threats to our success: "We face not only a resilient and growing insurgency; there is also a crisis of confidence among Afghans—in both their government and the international community—that undermines our credibility and emboldens the insurgents."

McChrystal detailed what success under Obama's original plan, which the President had announced on March 27, 2009, would require. The "new strategy" consisted of a counterinsurgency and a balance of military, political, and civic actions in Afghanistan, while providing support for Pakistan's efforts to fight the Taliban in the tribal regions, stabilizing Pakistan's government by "assisting efforts to enhance civilian control," and developing "a vibrant economy that provides opportunity for the people of Pakistan." McChrystal's bottom line was that Obama's counterinsurgency plan was not feasible with the 20,000 troops and limited resources that Obama had dedicated to it. Success would require an additional 40,000 troops and a commitment to a long-term strategy that protected the population from the insurgents, overhauled the corrupt and ineffective Karzai government, and eliminated Al Qaeda's safe haven in Pakistan.

The new Obama plan is the product of political hedging. It reiterates the goals of the original plan but limits the time in which to execute it. The U.S. Army's counterinsurgency manual warns that success "requires a firm political will and substantial patience by the government, its people, and the countries providing support." Obama's new plan gives General McChrystal some of the assets he needs to succeed, while providing Obama with a conveniently timed exit strategy. A politically motivated strategy may be good for his reelection, but it is bad for the chances of U.S. success in Afghanistan.

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During the presidential campaign Obama pledged to pull U.S. troops out of Iraq, calling it a distraction from the main threat, which he later identified in *Time*: "The central front is in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is unacceptable that almost seven years after 9/11, those responsible for the attacks remain at large. If another attack on our homeland occurs, it will likely come from this same region where 9/11 was planned." Including Pakistan is a start in crafting a workable U.S. policy in Central Asia. The administration's "new policy" hinted at the real reason the United States is concerned with the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan: "The threat that al Qaeda poses to the United States and our allies in Pakistan—including the possibility of extremists obtaining fissile material—is all too real." The success of the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan is inextricably linked to the efforts to establish a government in Islamabad that is capable and willing to assist. U.S. aid to Pakistan is linked to Pakistan's success in her fight against the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

Pakistan's interests have traditionally not been aligned with U.S. goals. Islamabad nominally supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, but the Taliban originated in Pakistan and received support from the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's intelligence service. Hamid Karzai is viewed as an ally of India, which is a threat to Pakistan. Pakistan maintains a large concentration of troops on the border with India and faces her own internal problems with radical Islamists. Taliban fighters in the frontier region that limit their activities to Afghanistan are not only not a priority for Pakistan; they actually serve her purposes. The *New York Times* reported that the S Wing of the ISI, responsible for operations outside of Pakistan, provided "money, military supplies and strategic planning guidance for Taliban commanders" as recently as March 2009, "months after Pakistani officials said that the days of the ISI playing a 'double game' had ended." When the United States leaves Afghanistan, Pakistan fears she will be left facing enemies to her west and east. Attaching conditions to funding is not enough to persuade Pakistan to sever her ties with the Taliban if the U.S. political will lasts only until July 2011. The signal to Pakistan is clear: The United States is leaving after a last-ditch effort to stabilize Afghanistan.

The range of choices Obama considered was slowly revealed to the American public through carefully controlled statements and a series of unauthorized leaks. First, McChrystal's report in August and his speech a month later at the Institute for Strategic Studies in London outlined the requirements for a counterinsurgency centered on defeating the Taliban and stabilizing the fledgling Afghan government. McChrystal conceded that this strategy will likely mean more short-term casualties, but in the long term it will be more likely to succeed if troop levels are increased and it is properly funded.

Second, Vice President Joe Biden proposed a limited counterterrorism approach that focused on hunting down Al Qaeda and largely ignoring the Taliban. A counterterrorist operation could be accomplished using drones, aircraft, and small numbers of special-operations troops. This approach would likely be viewed as abandoning Afghanistan, and the embryonic Afghan government would almost certainly collapse under the pressure. General McChrystal has referred to this strategy as "Chaosistan."

Third, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Karl Eikenberry, opposed the deployment of additional troops to the region. Eikenberry, a former Army lieutenant general who previously held McChrystal's position, argued that more troops would simply further Afghanistan's dependence on the United States.

Contrary to Obama's claims of more transparency in government, his deliberations on Afghanistan were, in large part, conducted behind closed doors. Leaks about the strategy discussions angered the administration, while Congress has gladly left the decisionmaking to an indecisive Commander in Chief. In October Sen. John McCain proposed an amendment to the defense appropriations bill that would have required McChrystal to testify concerning the counterinsurgency plan. The amendment was voted down by the Democrats, even though, in September 2007, they had demanded that General Petraeus testify concerning the rationale for the surge in Iraq.

The undeclared war has not been debated in Congress since September 2001. The Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), the basis for the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, is a one-page document that permits military action "against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States." In his report, McChrystal provided, in typical military language, the mission of the U.S.-dominated International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF):

> ISAF, in support of [the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan], conducts operations in Afghanistan to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development, in order

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to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.

Most Americans would agree that McChrystal's understanding of his mission in Afghanistan is beyond the scope of the AUMF.

The administration's long delay in announcing its new strategy has, at least, highlighted the shortcomings of the Bush administration's attempt to plant a democracy overnight in a country that has been devastated by three decades of war. The broader question of whether Afghanistan is capable of becoming a functioning state, let alone a functioning democracy, has intentionally been stifled within the United States. Afghanistan has a long history of foreign incursions that have resulted in defeat, earning her the title "graveyard of empires." The British, for most of the 19th century, tried to control Afghanistan during the "Great Game." They invaded and installed a friendly dictator who depended on the British military for legitimacy. The Afghans revolted and massacred all but a handful of the 16,000 British troops and civilians as they retreated east to India. In 1979 the Russians invaded in a similar effort to prop up the communist government of Babrak Karmal. The *mujahideen* fought the Russians with support from Pakistan, the United States, and Saudi Arabia. Their guerilla tactics slowly wore down the Russian military and the Kremlin's political will. After ten years of bloody combat, the Russians left Afghanistan, soundly defeated.

The problems Afghanistan faces cannot be overstated: intertribal fighting; a corrupt and ineffective government; a devastated infrastructure; a growing insurgency; meddling from Pakistan, India, Russia, and Iran; and an economy fueled by the illegal opium trade. The Afghan insurgency consists primarily of the remnants of the Taliban that fled to Pakistan after the U.S. invasion in 2001. The tribal areas along Afghanistan's border have become a new safe haven for the Taliban and Al Qaeda, from which (according to McChrystal's report) they "channel foreign fighters, suicide bombers, and technical assistance into Afghanistan, and offer ideological motivation, training, and financial assistance." The insurgents rarely engage ISAF forces in conventional battles. They ambush patrols, mine roads with increasingly more sophisticated IEDs, and use other unconventional tactics. The insurgents are not limited by time, political will, or a lack of resources. Many perfected their techniques against the Soviets and realized that the United States does not have the stomach for a long-term war that produces a steady stream of casualties.

To counter these threats, troops patrol villages, search homes, and interrogate locals in an effort to root out the enemy. These tactics are like using a butter knife to perform surgery. Special road-clearing units spend hours each day securing routes in heavily armored vehicles. One IED, which may cost $20 to produce, can destroy a $1 million armored vehicle and wound troops and civilians. As soon as the soldiers leave the area, the Taliban return to punish cooperative villagers or place another IED. Without the resources that McChrystal requested, the United States will be forced either to continue these ineffective tactics or to concede large areas of Afghanistan to the insurgents.

The insurgency, says McChrystal, "actively seeks to control the population and displace the national government." In pursuit of these goals, the Taliban has established a competing "shadow government"—the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The shadow government has been enabled by the failure of the national government to deliver services to the rural parts of the country. It has appointed governors for most provinces, established a body to receive complaints, installed *sharia* courts, and levied taxes, and it claims to "provide security against a corrupt government, ISAF forces, criminality, and local power brokers."

McChrystal's strategy hinted at, but did not explicitly state, an element critical to the success of any counterinsurgency: The government must be viewed as legitimate by the population. Hamid Karzai was reelected to a second five-year term in November only after his opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, refused to participate in a runoff, stating that a "transparent election is not possible." The results of the election were undermined by allegations of massive voter fraud and intimidation along with low turnout.

Karzai's reelection was business as usual for a government fraught with corruption. Transparency International recently ranked Afghanistan as the world's second-most-corrupt country. Bribes to police, judges, and bureaucrats are accepted as the cost of doing business. The most common form of corruption is also the most damaging. *Mushkil tarashi*, the withholding of government services (such as healthcare, education, and electricity) until a bribe is paid, is often the only interaction citizens have with their national government. The majority of Afghans see a return to strict *sharia* as the only viable solution.

Karzai acknowledges that officials at the highest levels of government are involved in corruption: "All the politicians in this country have acquired everything—money, lots of money . . . the banks of the world are full of money of our statesmen." The *New York Times* recently reported that Kabul's police chief, Mohammed Ayub Salangi, was

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renting his extravagant mansion (complete with Greek columns and a towering fountain) in the posh Sherpur neighborhood for $11,000 per month—approximately his annual salary. Legitimacy, in the face of such visible and open corruption, is hopeless.

In the *Wall Street Journal*, Pervez Musharraf, the former president of Pakistan, stated that the United States had a "golden opportunity to rescue the Afghan people" after liberating them from the "tyranny of al Qaeda and the Taliban." The United States "had the unequivocal support of the majority of Afghans." But the opportunity was missed. This may be the second and final opportunity to bring stability to Afghanistan.

President Obama should be willing to consider sending additional troops to Afghanistan if McChrystal needs them, and he must commit to success in Afghanistan and not limit the military's involvement to 18 months. In the absence of one of the three prongs of a counterinsurgency (military support, legitimacy, and training the host country's military and police to take over the effort), the entire operation will fail. The United States should pressure Afghanistan to return to a more parliamentary-style government. The Afghan constitution, drafted only 13 months after the Taliban was overthrown, contributes to the endemic corruption and instability. McChrystal's report states that Afghan communities, which have a long tradition of local community governance, are "unable to hold local officials accountable through either direct elections or judicial processes, especially when those individuals are protected by senior government officials." A parliamentary system was considered by the Constitutional Loya Jirga (the grand council that drafted the constitution) but was rejected, after lobbying by Karzai with U.S. support, in favor of a strong presidential system with a highly centralized administration. The parliamentary system is more closely related to the traditional *loya jirga*. Musharraf correctly noted, "Afghanistan for centuries has been governed loosely through a social covenant between all the ethnic groups, under a sovereign king. This structure is needed again to bring peace and harmony."

Finally, Obama needs to address adequately the source of many of Afghanistan's problems: Pakistan. The insurgency continues because of Pakistan's disinterest in controlling her border regions. If Pakistan continues to offer safe haven to Al Qaeda and the Taliban, the United States should either expand the military mission to include the frontier regions and deal with the foreign-relations fallout from a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty, or dramatically reduce the U.S. presence.

Matthew Hoh closed his letter on a somber note: "The dead return only in bodily form to be received by families who must be reassured that their dead have sacrificed for a purpose worthy of futures lost, love vanished, and promised dreams unkept. I have lost confidence such assurances can anymore be made." The Obama plan, a political compromise, assures that without substantial change, our troops will continue making the ultimate sacrifice for a mission that their Commander in Chief knows is unwinnable.

Janek C. Kazmierski, a former U.S. Marine Corps Officer who served in Afghanistan, is a third-year law student at the University of South Carolina.

Missing Mass

by Timothy Murphy

He hath put a new song in my mouth.
Psalm 40:3

Going to church afield
I bear the Decalogue
as St. Michael, his shield.
My faithful altar dog
precedes me up the aisle,
mile after dusty mile.

A gale sweeps through the choir
and dries the prostrate grass
lightning and prairie fire
forge to beaten brass.
Tinted anew each day,
the dome is blue or gray.

Hearing the Psalmist's call,
I translate into Word
the blood of every bird
I sacrifice this fall.
Responsive, I record
a new song to the Lord.

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Mr. Brown Goes to Washington

As I write, the pundits are all atwitter over the stunning upset pulled off by Scott Brown, the "independent" Republican who made mincemeat out of former state attorney general Martha Coakley in the race to fill the Massachusetts "Kennedy seat" in the U.S. Senate. Democrats are lashing out at each other over their loss, with the national leadership blaming Coakley's odd decision to go on vacation in the crucial weeks leading up to the election, and the Coakley camp blaming the national party for not coming to her aid sooner. The turning point in the campaign was reached during one of the debates, when Washington "wise man" David Broder—the archetypal Washington insider and professional "centrist"—asked Brown if he would dare to sit in the "Kennedy seat" and pass the deciding vote against Obamacare, which Ted had made his personal crusade in his final days. "Well with all due respect," responded Brown, "it's not the Kennedys' seat, and it's not the Democrats' seat—it's the people's seat."

As they say in the comics: "Ka-pow!"

Brown is no dummy: He knew what he was doing, and it took him but a few moments to plug into the populist rage sweeping across this country—rage against our arrogant political elites, who believe they are entitled to their positions, perks, and privileges. Coakley is accused of not running a good campaign, but the truth is that she barely ran a campaign at all until it was far too late. She took an extended Christmas vacation while Brown was out knocking on doors because she assumed victory was guaranteed. She started out 19 points ahead of Brown in the polls and wound up losing by a 5-point margin.

It was great fun watching the pro-Obama pundits and media try to "spin" this one—like watching a fly try to swim against the current of a tsunami.

But no matter how acrobatic their spin, they can't evade the meaning of their stunning defeat in that bluest of true-blue states, Massachusetts. Imagine what is going to happen in, say, Nevada come election time. Harry Reid can, and it ain't pretty.

The meaning of the Brown victory is the same as that of the Obama victory: A perceived outsider triumphs over the entrenched establishment. As I wrote back in December 2007,

> The paradigm that best describes what is happening on the ground in Iowa, New Hampshire, and beyond isn't "right" versus "left," "Christianism" versus "secularism," or red-versus-blue state mind-sets, but populist demands for change against our hidebound, insolent, arrogant elites in the media as well as in government.

This was my explanation for the rise of Obama and the upending of the Democratic Party elites, personified by Hillary Clinton and her supporters. With the Brown campaign, the populist demand for change continued to swell, only attached to a different party. This time, the populist wave is even stronger and angrier, because of the betrayal of the Obamaites, who have sold the country out for the benefit of Goldman Sachs, Big Pharma, and their friends on Wall Street.

In one sense, this is a boon to a seemingly revivified conservative movement. The tea-party movement, to which Brown made an effort to reach out, was vindicated, and this will bolster like-minded candidates across the country. But Brown is not really a maverick; his record in the Massachusetts legislature puts him on the left wing of a very liberal Republican Party. To top it off, he's a party-lining neocon when it comes to foreign policy. The evolving view of many in the tea-party movement that the Afghan crusade is futile is not shared by Brown.

Although the two wars we are fighting weren't much discussed during the election, Brown does support Obama's war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and when General McChrystal made a well-publicized request for 40,000 more troops, Brown, who emphasized his service in the National Guard, was all for it.

Prediction: By the time this is published, the "Brown for President" boomlet will have already started to gain momentum. Yes, I know—who ever heard of a state legislator rising to the U.S. Senate after a few years, and then going on to take the White House? Oh, wait . . .

Brown is merely the white Obama, an agent of "change" that is really the same old message, repackaged and served up slightly cold: smaller big government (he endorses a modified version of Obamacare and is silent on the bailouts) and eternal war. The jutting chin, the heroic physique, the blow-dried hair, the posing inside his pickup truck—it all adds up to more Madison Avenue faux-populism. ♦

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Soul of the North

by Timothy Murphy

Out of the wilds, I pray.
Bound by my northern birth
to fish, to hunt the earth
and follow my forebears' way,
I mutter *I have sinned*,
wander the grama grass,
flourish awhile and pass
whistling into the wind.

As char swim to the clear
tundra rivers that run
under the midnight sun,
as wolves follow the deer
drawn from ford to ford,
as clamorous geese in V's
throng to the thawing seas—
all creatures of one accord—
my soul thirsts for the Lord.

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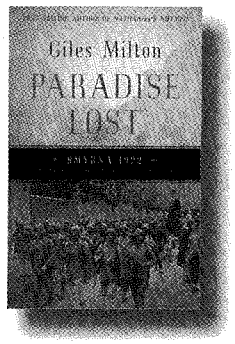

On the Quai at Smyrna

by Srdja Trifkovic

Paradise Lost: Smyrna 1922—The Destruction of a Christian City in the Islamic World
by Giles Milton
New York: Basic Books
464 pp., $27.95

THE LITERATURE in the English language on various long-established communities eradicated by the horrors of the 20th century is largely dominated by the Jewish holocaust. Accounts of other disappeared communities—of Italians in today's Croatia, the Poles of Galicia, the Serbs of the former Habsburg Military Border, or Germans everywhere east of the Oder-Neisse line—are available in the languages of the victims, but seldom in reliable English.

Over the past decade competent authors have started to fill the gap. Pamela Ballinger's *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans* is a scholarly yet readable account of the Istrian-Dalmatian exodus of Italians after 1945. In *A Terrible Revenge: The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans*, Alfred-Maurice de Zayas provided a comprehensive treatment of his subject.

The destruction of the Greek and other non-Muslim communities in Smyrna and the rest of Asia Minor in 1922 was the worst exodus in history hitherto, affecting up to two million people. The event is now largely forgotten outside Greece and Turkey, but good historical sources regarding it have long been available. U.S. Consul George Horton's gripping, highly personal eyewitness account, *The Blight of Asia*, was republished in paperback in 2003. Marjorie Housepian Dobkin's *The Smyrna Affair* and *Smyrna 1922: The Destruction of a City* are near-definitive studies, conclusive on the Turks' culpability for the great fire. Michael Llewellyn Smith's *Ionian Visions: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922* deals with the diplomatic and military background to the great powers' rivalry that tempted Greece to go *va banque* with the Megali Idea. A.J. Hobbins' long essay "Paradise Lost: The Merchant Princes and the Destruction of Smyrna, 1922" offers an insight into the life of the European-descended Levantine *haute bourgeoisie* of the city on the eve of its destruction.

English journalist Giles Milton centers his account of Smyrna's demise on the same numerically insignificant but influential group, using similar sources under the same title as Hobbins' essay. (Curiously, Milton provides but a single passing reference to his predecessor in scholarship.) This focus makes the book commercially viable, while undermining its historical accuracy. The people of Smyrna provide a roughly sketched backdrop. The momentous political and military events leading up to the catastrophe are compiled from secondary sources, with undue emphasis on the importance of David Lloyd George. The broader social, cultural, and religious context of the Pontic tragedy is absent, or merely hinted at. The book's title should have been *The Charmed Life and Demise of Smyrna's Merchant Dynasties*.

The author's account of the Levantine elite's attitudes and way of life in the early 20th century oozes with sentimentalism. The descriptions of the "rambling villas and pleasure gardens" of the exclusive suburb of Bournabat, of the inhabitants' lavish parties, yacht races, and rigidly hierarchical mores, are pure *Gone With the Wind*. One villa had

> scores of reception rooms as well as a gilded ballroom, vast dining room, drawing room and library . . . a spectacular view of the Magnesia Mountains . . . the great entrance hall [was] mounted with scores of trophies and stuffed animals.

Another "most lovable house" had "the unstudied charm and graciousness which comes from the daily use of beautiful things" and required "a regiment of servants to keep it going." Yet another was famous for its opulent interior, with 38 rooms, two spectacular crystal chandeliers in the great atrium, an imported iron stair balustrade ("one of the marvels of the colony"), and four grand pianos in the ballroom.

The life of the occupants, as lovingly reconstructed by Milton, focused on a never-ending sequence of "gala extravaganzas," tea parties, yachting, hunting, clubbing, and charitable events. Their *noblesse oblige* entailed wiring electricity to

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some fishermen's cottages here, endowing an orphanage there. Their broadmindedness included employing workers "regardless of race or nationality"—presumably unlike their fellow capitalists in other lands and in other times.

Between the lines of Milton's admiring account, these Levantine plutocrats come across as somewhat vulgar philistines, indifferent to the suffering of their fellow Christians, and haughtily convinced of their own invincibility. He does not mention whether they took note of the massacre of "more than 200,000 Armenians . . . between 1894 and 1896"; but when thousands of Greeks were massacred and tens of thousands summarily evicted from their homes in Adramyttium and all along the coast between May and August 1914,

> they remained surprisingly sanguine in the face of such violence. Although these events were occurring less than an hour's ride from the city, they were confident that they would be safe.

After Turkey entered the fray in October 1914, the Bournabat dynasties suffered some "minor alterations to their daily routines" (such as not receiving daily newspapers from London and Paris) while continuing to live "in their own little private Raj." Milton mentions in passing the abolition in 1914 of the "Capitulations," the trading privileges extorted from the Turks by Britain and France that enabled untaxed expatriate merchants to grow immensely rich. He glosses over the fact that their wealth did not reflect any particular entrepreneurial flair: It depended entirely on the submissive decrepitude of the declining Ottoman Empire. It is a measure of Milton's lack of understanding of the city's ethnic and social divisions that he terms the gloating of the Turks at this news "a strange reaction," and faults them for failing to "consider the many benefits the Levantines had brought to Smyrna."

During the Armenian genocide of 1915—which Milton too tactfully refers to as "deportations"—Smyrna "remained untouched" thanks to the Ottoman governor, Rahmi Bey, who appears to have been well looked after by the rich. Also in 1915, their British, French, and Italian citizenships notwithstanding, the wealthy Smyrniots were present "at a glittering party hosted by the Austrian consul" to honor the German inspector-general of the Ottoman army, Liman von Sanders. In 1916, as more than 200,000 Greeks endured the horrors of deportation from the Aegean coast to windswept inner Anatolia, "Smyrna itself was once again spared . . . [none] of the Levantines of Bournabat were sent to the interior." In 1917, "the year of Passchendaele and stagnation in the mud of Flanders," the rich were "assembled in the Smyrna Opera House—all in black tie and tails—for the premiere performance of Verdi's *Rigoletto*." After the Armistice in 1918, the released Allied POWs plunged into the city's lively nightlife; one noted that "the feminine element from the age of about thirteen overdresses like a professional." The arrival of the Greek army in May 1919 was "a time of heady excitement" for the Levantine rich, with tennis parties, bathing expeditions, and outings by moonlight.

Even when the Ottoman sultanate began to metamorphose into nationalist Turkey in 1920,

> [t]he fact that eastern Anatolia had erupted into violence did not impinge on the way they lived their lives . . . They turned a blind eye to everything that was happening in the hinterlands of the country.

During the dark winter (for everyone else) of 1920-21, "[t]he inherent gaiety of the Levantine families continued to suggest that all was well" as the Girauds, one of the most prominent among them, "toasted the New Year at their spectacular fancy-dress ball." Even on the eve of the disaster, the news of the Greek army's collapse was "dismissed as idle gossip in the city's brasseries and clubhouses." After all, "[t]rade had picked up since the dark days of 1921 and the port was once again busy." One week and 100,000 Smyrniot lives later, the merchant elite was safely on board Allied warships—or else providing hospitality to Mustafa Kemal and his fellow architects of the city's disaster.

The character of the community becomes clear from its attitude during the three months between the outbreak of the war in Europe and Turkey's fatal decision to join the Central Powers. Before the war, one British vice consul described the Levantine expatriates as "more exuberantly patriotic than we allow ourselves to appear at home"—yet only 18 young men from the passport-holding community volunteered to fight for the cause of their presumed mother country. As for the rest, "[t]he offspring of the Levantine families displayed less willingness to volunteer immediately, preferring to bide their time and see how events evolved." Their biding went on until the war's end. When push came to shove, the Whitalls, Patersons, Woods, Girauds, and Van der Zees showed that—far from having "divided loyalties"—they had none, except to their own wealth, safety, and unearned privileges.

The subtitle to the book's British edition, "The Destruction of Islam's City of Tolerance," is a politically correct misnomer: Milton (thankfully) does not attempt to advance any claim that Smyrna's unique pre-1922 mix and way of life owed anything to Islam as such. He does make a feeble attempt, however, to place *Paradise Lost* in the context of the Ottomans'

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supposed spirit of diversity. He approvingly quotes an "Austrian savant" who left the city in 1874 with the conviction that, "in matters of religion . . . [the Turks] are the most tolerant people of the Orient." He claims that, after the fall of Smyrna, Greeks and other Christians "were often tortured and killed in revenge for the excesses committed by the Greek army," much as Western journalists described the destruction of the Serb community in Kosovo and its priceless churches as "Albanian revenge" for the supposed outrages of the Milosevic regime.

In reality, Smyrna's prosperity and polyglot diversity were an exception to the dreary, brutal Ottoman rule everywhere else. It was allowed to exist because it was profitable to a chronically bankrupt state based on an institutionalized discrimination against non-Muslims and the unfriendly coexistence of its many races. Devoid of administrative or commercial talent, the Ottomans had long used the services of educated Christians and awarded them certain privileges. Greek tax collectors and administrators were essential to the running of the empire, but the safety and long-term status of these Phanariots were never guaranteed, as witnessed by the hanging of their patriarch on Easter Day, 1822. The Smyrniot mix of Turkish, Greek, Jewish, and Levantine cultures and practices was always tenuous and unable to forge a distinct local or regional identity.

The final third of *Paradise Lost* deals with the tragic week that started on September 6, 1922, as the battered remnants of the Greek army passed through Smyrna heading for the ships that would take them back to Greece. Hundreds of thousands of Greek and Armenian refugees came next. The ensuing disaster could be and was forecast, but—as Milton points out—Mustafa Kemal and his cohorts quite deliberately decided not to prevent it, while the governments of Britain, France, Italy, and the United States preferred not to get involved. Five centuries of persecution culminated in the Christians' final expulsion, not under a sultan-caliph, but under the founder of the Turkish republic, who abolished the caliphate and separated the mosque and state. A horrifying massacre ensued, on par in ferocity, but on a far greater scale, with that inflicted on Constantinople after its fall to the Turks in 1453. Milton's account, while unoriginal, is comprehensive and accurate. The nobility and bravery of such individuals as Asa Jennings, which Milton reveals, were redeeming sparks in a very dark night.

The aftertaste of *Paradise Lost* is bitter. The parvenue glitter of the Levantine elite could not conceal that, to survive and prosper, the Smyrniots had to learn how to be obsequious to their political masters, insincere with each other, and unfeeling with their less fortunate coreligionists. Together with a polyglot Constantinople community of Ottoman officials, Greek and Armenian merchants, South Slav dragomans, Albanian bodyguards, and Young Turk conspirators, they formed the core of the urban "Ottoman culture" in the final decades of the caliphate. It had a certain charm, but it was neither pleasant nor creative. Its demise became inevitable when raw Turkish nationalism arose from the ruins of Ottoman collapse. The final chapters of Giles Milton's book come across as a long-overdue indictment of the murderous character of that nationalism.

Paradise Lost should be treated as an historical novel rather than history. Its many faults notwithstanding, it is an easy and interesting book to read. To paraphrase Marshal Bosquet, *C'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas l'histoire.*

Srdja Trifkovic is the author, most recently, of Defeating Jihad.

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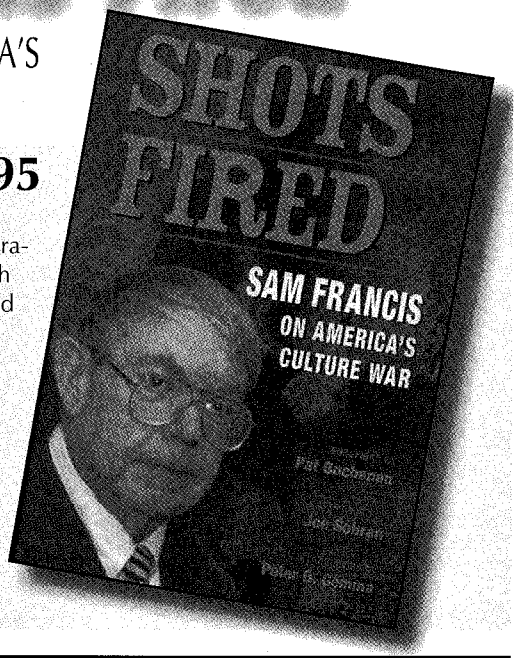
—*Aaron D. Wolf*



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One For the Road

by Derek Turner

On Roads: A Hidden History
by Joe Moran
London: Profile
288 pp., £14.99

In the summer of 1956, a junior transport minister activated a green traffic light in the middle of a field in Lancashire. That was the signal for a bulldozer to flatten a hedge and start shifting soil. In a suitably Monty Pythonesque twist, the bulldozer ran out of petrol a few seconds later.

Such were the first inauspicious moments of the Preston Bypass, now part of the M6 motorway—the first 8.25 miles of a 1,440-mile network that has radically changed the personality of Britain and is simultaneously patronized and reviled by millions every day.

The motorway concept was welcomed by many Britons—one newspaper going so far as to say that the bypass's opening by Harold Macmillan in December 1958 was "a day of national rejoicing." The opening of the M1 50 years ago this year was greeted even more hyperbolically, according to one newspaper, with "sentiments too deep for words." In 1966, Labour transport minister Barbara Castle orated revealingly that motorway interchanges were "the cathedrals of the modern world."

As Joe Moran of Liverpool's John Moores University says in this subtle and penetrating book, the Preston Bypass "carried the nervous hopes of a nation"—symbolizing not only an end to war-era austerity but admittance to modernity. The exotic new roadways, with their unprecedented speeds and beautifully engineered surfaces, junctions, flyovers, service stations, diners, warehouses, industrial estates, lay-bys, and sans-serif signage, briefly became destinations in themselves. Occasionally, one still comes across Technicolor postcards showing "South Mimms Services" or "Traffic on the Westway." Such naiveté seems now anachronistic, even charming, but the motorway was an essential ingredient in (as well as the perfect metaphor of) a wider movement embracing change and movement for their own sakes.

Roads are "the most commonly viewed and least contemplated landscape in Britain," and the author encourages us to look at them as being, if not quite cathedrals, impressive in their own right. He recognizes (unlike the car-besotted Margaret Thatcher) that road-building carries a high environmental and human price tag, but nonetheless regrets that we now live in a "road-sceptical age." Moran seeks to restart our stalled love of roads, particularly motorways, by alerting us to the unsuspected history and unconventional beauty in every stretch of apparently anodyne asphalt.

The English idea of the road is a universe away from Moran's favored M-monuments to the Machine. (The title really should have been *On Motorways*.) The King's Highway from Central Casting is a tree-embowered lane threading through gentle countryside studded with thatched cottages and suffused by woodsmoke. This is the "rolling English road" as conjured up by G.K. Chesterton (which "went to Birmingham by way of Beachy Head"), Chaucer, Blake, Cobbett, George Borrow, Robert Louis Stevenson, Kenneth Grahame, and innumerable others.

This patriotic route is always conceived as ancient, respectful of character and contours, cognizant of tradition and property rights, and populated by the thronging phantoms of past sojourners. It is a slow-moving, weather-punished highway linking cathedral towns, holy wells, sacred groves, deserted villages, battlefields, castles, manors, assizes, inns, farms, fairs, and markets; it exists for the convenience of yeomen, but is also an avenue of adventure, leading from the depths of the countryside to the sea and infinite possibility. It had "gentlemen of the road," streetwalkers, vagrants, gypsies, bedbugs, watered-down beer, and atrocious food. ("A trauellere must have the mouth of a hogge to eate what is set before him," recorded Thomas Nashe bitterly in 1589.) But these comprehensible problems were counterbalanced by the perceived organic domesticity of the road. Even if the road swept you off your feet and away, it could as easily one day roll you back home again. The motorway sliced surgically through these pleasant notions, and is now arguably giving rise to a new type of driver, a tense whirligig who calls roads by numbers instead of names and passes heedlessly through vast

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blank spaces relying on sat navs.

A small-*c* conservative minority always perceived motorways as vaguely foreign impositions (the Greek *asphalton* means "of alien origin") whose relatively straight, inhuman lines and associated new architecture seemed ugly and unsettling. The disconcerting new landscape features elicited snobbish superiority about American culture or visceral fear of continental Europeans. Europe's first motorways were, after all, built by Mussolini and Hitler—unsurprisingly, given the close links between fascism and futurism. (*Road* and *raid*, interestingly, share the same root word.)

By their very existence, it was dimly felt, motorways encouraged the formerly settled to become socially as well as physically mobile—to forsake their homes and families, to question traditions and assumptions, to be sensate, discontented, and restive. Tory transport minister Ernest Marples is supposed to have said, "My God, what have I started?" as he watched the first cars charging onto the M1, although the story is surely too good to be true. It is unsurprising that they were viewed in this way. Motorways materialized in the same frenetic period as consumerism, counterculture, pop music, sexual liberation, family breakdown, imperial meltdown, mass immigration, the EEC, and space travel. Moran is alive to this inchoate critique and presents it fairly, despite his pro-road and mildly social-democratic sentiments.

The Epimethean minority has gradually become part of a majority, as their misgivings have become allied to spending cuts, disenchantment about traffic problems (to many, perhaps a synecdoche of national and cultural sclerosis), and deep ecology to constitute a powerful coalition against all new road schemes.

Motorways are for Moran psychogeography, macadam delineations of modern preoccupations. But as well as being of anthropological significance, they are, he thinks, glamorous in their functionality, materials, and design, ironic crosscurrents of taste and fashion; fascinating for their politico-cultural sur- and subtexts, the extraordinary ordinariness of those who made the roads and those who use them. He cruises easily and amusingly through all these subjects, strewing behind him nerdish trivia, astute linkages (junctions), and ponderable quotes from academics, politicians, TV shows, and rock bands.

Brian Eno (a "polymath," according to the star-struck Moran) has surmised that perhaps sometime "stained concrete and dirty steel will look rather quaint and friendly and welcoming, like exposed brick does now"—yet, as Moran replies, "underneath Spaghetti Junction, that future seems some way off." For the author, however, there is beauty to be found now in this nonplace that is nonetheless a place.

Seen from above, whether speaking sociologically or from a police helicopter, the constantly changing patterns of traffic are to Moran as mesmerizing as the seemingly simultaneous movements of birds—millions of individual decisions amounting to a shared purpose and identity, the metallic glinting of the vehicles a little like the iridescent feathers of starlings. He reminds us that although motorways prove disastrous to millions of wild animals every year (such as the poor swans that mistake tarmac for water), their verges are also valuable refuges for many rare species of plant and animal—unsprayed if noisy Edens in a crowded country of industrial farming, executive houses, and over-tidy gardens. He asks us to admire the engineering expertise evinced in every bend and remember the contextures, contradictory impulses, and reassuringly human muddles behind the ruthlessly rational miles.

On Roads will not necessarily persuade, but whatever one's views of motorways (or modern Britain), Moran's carefully engineered construction will lend understanding to every journey.

Derek Turner is the editor of The Quarterly Review.

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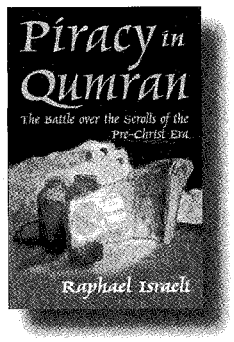

Dead Sea Drama

by Jovan Culibrk

Piracy in Qumran: The Battle Over the Scrolls of the Pre-Christ Era
by Raphael Israeli
New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction
220 pp., $39.95

Ever since Marshall McLuhan's famous review of Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* and Parker Tyler's *Magic and Myth of the Movies* in 1947, Western intellectuals have felt obliged to mix traditional scholarship with themes from popular culture. Needless to say, few could compete with McLuhan's brilliance and erudition in taking Parry's and Lord's theories about the oral composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and applying them to the media revolution that has transformed our world. Even fewer scholars have had enough direct knowledge of popular culture to be taken seriously by those who have lived in that cultural milieu. As a result, postmodernist theorists, for all their fevered talk of "discourse," have accomplished very little. Here at the beginning of the 21st century, there are few theorists worthy of being named in the same sentence with McLuhan.

Thus it was with a mixture of hope and uneasiness that I sat down to review a book about the Dead Sea Scrolls written in the vein of a courtroom thriller. As in any good Agatha Christie mystery, the story begins with an enigma: the ancient community of Qumran hovering in the air above a small elite society gathered around the dinner table somewhere in the Middle East, a table that in the next chapter will reveal itself as a metaphor for the judge's seat. An eloquent discussion by like-minded intellectuals will turn out to be a recollection of an epic courtroom battle in which two of them play the roles of the two principal heroes.

Fortunately for readers and reviewers, Prof. Raphael Israeli of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem abandoned his theoretical discourse exactly here, at page viii. But his analysis of a trial that became a *cause célèbre* is still a surprise, although it is written by a scholar who has never failed to confront contemporary realities. Israeli's honesty is on display in his acclaimed book, *Green Crescent Over Nazareth: The Displacement of Christians by Muslims in the Holy Land* (2002), in which he applied his masterful knowledge of Islam to produce a thorough analysis of the rapid Islamization of Nazareth, the birthplace of Christianity, under the rule of the Jewish state of Israel.

Early Christianity, in fact, provides the link between these two books: At the heart of *Piracy in Qumran* is a document that is key to understanding the true nature of the Essene community, which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. Ever since the discovery of the scrolls (1953-59), some scholars have argued that the community that produced them must have influenced the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah (*Some Precepts of the Law*, abbreviated as 4QMMT or, most often, simply MMT) was found in Cave 4 in Qumran in 70 fragments of six copies of the same text. Reconstructed, it will make 130 lines that "earned so much controversy, accumulated so many arguments, and revolutionized the history of the Second Temple." The work was written between 50 B.C. and A.D. 50, apparently as a letter from Qumran's "Teacher of Righteousness" to his opponent, the "Wicked Priest" of the Temple, and/or one of the Hasmonean kings. The text deals with the nature and definition of Judaism and the relationship between various streams of the faith, and it reveals very clearly that the Qumran community was quintessentially a Jewish sect, and not an early church.

As Professor Israeli puts it, the letter "is analogous to a present-day ultra-Orthodox rabbi admonishing the Israeli Prime Minister to adopt as official policy the rules of his haredi ('faction')." This interpretation, doubtless correct, disappointed an entire school of thought that saw the Dead Sea Scrolls as a major source of Christianity, and the only promise it held out was the possibility "that John the Baptist was under the influence of the Essenes."

But scholarship has gone a long way from the unearthing of the document to the reaching of inescapable conclusions. In the immediate aftermath of the discovery, fragments were given to John Strugnell, who worked for decades on reconstructing and publishing them, until he deciphered and identified some 100 fragments, pieced some of them together, and reduced them to 70 unrelated piec-

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es. By 1980, he "could go no further because many words were missing which could not be reconstructed unless one had a wide Talmudic education in addition to philology." At that point, Elisha Qimron, a young scholar from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheba, entered the story. Qimron, who had "made an international name for himself for his insightful and path-breaking scholarship in the Hebrew language," was the first Israeli academician ever to join the close-knit community of predominantly Western Christian scholars who had monopolized the scrolls from the time of their discovery.

Qimron worked on his painstaking reconstruction for 11 years, filling in some 40 percent of the missing text of MMT. In 1984, he reported the first of his findings, and in 1986 he finished the first draft on "the halakhic aspect of the document." It was copied and sent to four experts in Jewish law in different parts of the world. Once they had received and considered the responses of these men, Strugnell and Qimron prepared MMT in both Hebrew and English translation, together with a 300-page study, all of which was to be published by Oxford University Press. Now the plot was beginning to unfold.

Trouble began when one of the four confidants, in a breach of trust, distributed the text and translation of MMT to other scholars. Early in 1991, Zdzislaw Jan Kapera, a professor at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, published them in the local journal *Qumran Chronicle*, anonymously and without authorization. While the Israeli Antiquities Authority convinced Kapera to apologize and withdraw the contested issue of the journal, the text of MMT was published once again, this time "as a part of the introduction to a photographed edition of the entire Dead Sea Scrolls collection," by the Biblical Archaeology Society chaired by Hershel Shanks, also the editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

The story made its way into the pages of the *New York Times* and of prestigious law journals, and surfaced at scholarly conferences. Qimron's attorney sued in Jerusalem District Court for breach of copyright by a journal published in the United States, in a case abounding in legal precedents. The crux of the matter was summarized by Judge James Oakes of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, who wrote a study in an issue of the *Houston Law Review* devoted to *Qimron* v. *Shanks*. Oakes writes:

> I do not think most courts would have a problem in holding that, given the tremendous importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for scholarly research in the areas of Judaic and Christian civilization, there was a fair use at least in light of the long delay in Qimron's own publication of 4QMMT if, but only if, the Shanks publication had duly acknowledged Qimron's scholarly role.

Piracy in Qumran goes deeply and at length into the hardships faced by Israeli Judge Dalia Dorner during a trial that lasted a year and a half: the problem of how to bridge the legal systems of the state of Israel and the United States ("there is a universal assumption of equality between legal systems of enlightened countries"); how "originality" was to be defined in determining whether a moral right exists to a work of art or science; how to detect and define that extra element of creativity, which alone differentiates between copyright and creation.

Raphael Israeli dwells at even greater length on the reactions and resulting debates that followed Judge Dorner's verdict in favor of Qimron in 1993, upheld by the Israeli Supreme Court in August 2000. From the court's insertion of the argument that moral and material components of copyright law are equivalent, to the alleged "bringing into play what Oakes called 'theological law'" and feminist narratologist Martha Woodmansee's attack on a verdict issued "in masculine terms of insemination"—everything became the subject of a debate. Nevertheless, "lawyers on both sides had to admit that the precedent had been established that a copyright could be claimed for a reconstruction of an ancient text."

In 2000, Dr. Qimron told the *New York Times*' Jerusalem correspondent that "This ruling showed that intellectual property also comes under the commandment, 'Thou shalt not steal.'" This confirms for Raphael Israeli that the moral rules that the ancient Qumran community strove to preserve still obtain today.

Fr. Jovan Culibrk is a monk at the Cetinje Monastery.

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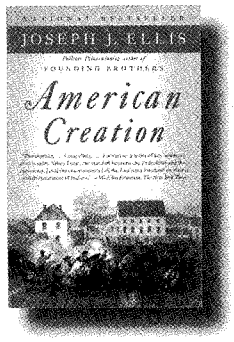

A Sum of Contradictions

by Fr. Michael P. Orsi

American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic
by Joseph J. Ellis
New York: Alfred A. Knopf
304 pp., $26.95

IN *AMERICAN CREATION* Joseph Ellis, a prominent scholar of the American Revolution known for his embrace of the Sally Hemings myth (see "Tom and Sally and Joe and Fawn," by Egon Richard Tausch, *Views*, March 1999), shows how serendipitously the American founding actually unfolded, hardly in accordance with the godlike clarity of vision suggested by our national hagiography. Instead, we learn that Washington's insight of "land and time" being on his side affected his conduct of the war; Adams was ambivalent regarding democracy; Jefferson's words and actions regarding the power of the presidency were often contradictory; the delayed application of the most provocative statements of the Declaration of Independence actually set the stage for enlarging the American franchise; Madison's purposeful ambiguity in parts of the Constitution enabled its passage; and the founders' conflicted treatment of the Indians reflected the realpolitik they all exercised.

Yet Ellis fails to identify the full context of the founders' responses to the events he portrays. They were men of the 18th century, who had a high regard for ancient Rome, its leaders, and the virtues they valued. Certainly, Washington's admiration and emulation of the upright Cato and the noble Cincinnatus are well attested. However, the Roman model also shaped the seemingly disparate personalities of Adams, Jefferson, and Madison. For example, Adams said of Cicero, "All ages of the world have not produced a greater statesman and philosopher combined." Cicero loved the Roman Republic above all else. Though preferring the *optimates*, he was willing to compromise with the *populares* for the sake of preserving the state. This flexibility characterized all the founders. What made them great was their willingness to perceive situations broadly, allowing them to sacrifice personal preference for the common good.

As for democracy, the founders' understanding of popular government was hardly the modern one. They favored a republic directed by an aristocracy of the elite, a meritocracy of virtue. Jefferson himself was repelled by the candidacy of Jackson. "Adams," Ellis writes, "feared the people as much as the monarchy, neither of which, he wisely reckoned, was omniscient." For Adams, "the revolution was a transfer of authority from a corrupt regime to a more enlightened one."

ELLIS'S FONDNESS for Jefferson and Madison leads him to give them more credit than they deserve for the conscious direction of America's policies. For example, he contends that Jefferson stealthily inserted into the Declaration of Independence the famous words regarding equality, rights, and the "consent of the governed" to plant the seeds of a *real* revolution—one that would mandate individual rights, end slavery, provide for women's suffrage, and sanction civil rights. This utterly anachronistic reading goes far beyond anything that Jefferson's limited view of republican government could have endured.

Similarly, Ellis portrays Madison as having had an activist agenda for the Constitution. The ratification of that document, he contends, was primarily the result of Madison's ambiguous language. Ellis suggests that the main purpose of the Constitution was to provide "a political framework for an ongoing negotiation between the states and federal government." Certainly, the South had no such understanding! "Because of [the founders] the American Revolution moved forward," Ellis says, "with deliberate speed, the effects of which are still shaping us today." This is more a disservice to the founders' vision than a compliment to their farsightedness.

As Henry Adams wrote when examining the conduct of British politicians during the American Civil War, "they were a sum of contradictions." The same can be said of the founders, and indeed politicians of every age.

Fr. Michael P. Orsi is a research fellow in law and religion at Ave Maria School of Law in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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The Mental Time Machine

The Metropolitan Opera has a new production of Bizet's *Carmen*, which premiered in New York City last New Year's Eve. I read the review by Anthony Tommasini, the *New York Times*' most competent music critic, who understands singing as well as he knows operatic literature. Mr. Tommasini raved over the production, the work of the English director Richard Eyre, and gave the cast, which includes Elīna Garanča in the title role and Roberto Alagna as Don José, high praise as well. The new *Carmen* sounds like a real accomplishment altogether. But for one thing: Mr. Eyre moved the setting of the opera forward, from the Seville of the 1830's stipulated by Prosper Mérimée, whose novella Bizet's librettists had adapted for the stage, to that of the 1930's.

Now *Carmen* is a work that nobody—director, conductor, or singer—has a right to get wrong, which means, in part, to meddle with, save for a damn good reason. Putting Micaela (whose music is some of the opera's most glorious) in the smugglers' pass with a woolen coat and brown satchel common to women of the lower-middle class in the dreary interwar period is an example of meddlesomeness of the inexcusable sort. Eyre has explained that *Carmen* is too familiar to audiences, whom he hoped to shock and awe into a fresh appreciation of the opera by evoking the brutal and repressive spirit of the Spanish Civil War. My own immediate reaction to this bit of political correctness was to reflect that, had the Communists won in Spain, an updated *Carmen* might plausibly be set outside a gulag fence instead of a bullring. The serious objection, however, is that neither Mérimée's book nor Bizet's opera touches in the least on the politics, liberal or monarchist, of early 19th-century Spain, which is wholly extraneous to both works.

One might suppose that the fact of *Carmen*'s familiarity indicates the opera's huge popularity, which suggests in turn that there never was a need to make it less familiar to operagoers. But even if there had been, moving the historical setting forward by a full century fails to accomplish this feat. Surely the Seville of Mérimée's time is no more difficult to grasp imaginatively than the Seville of Orwell's, which would be equally unrecognizable to modern tourists. If familiarity were the criterion, Eyre could have put *Carmen* in the socialist Spain of the early 21st century, with, in the background of the action, gay couples leaving the town hall in wedding parties and immigrant girls from Morocco washing their aprons outside the cigarette factory alongside the gypsy lasses. Or, if shock were the director's principal aim, he could have set the opera a hundred years in the future, when Spain has become a Muslim country, cigarettes have been outlawed, and Christians instead of bulls are being killed in the arena. In that case, Eyre's problem would have been that the composer's score, which combines elements of Berlioz with intimations of Debussy, can no more convey the sensibility of an imagined futuristic Spain than it can the Europe of Edith Piaf. Bizet's music, like the opera considered as a whole, is at once historical and timeless. At any rate, degrees of familiarity have exactly nothing to do with artistic appreciation. If they did, Mr. Eyre would have had a case to make for adding syncopation and electric guitars to the score and orchestration, and curators at the Vatican could defend a decision to dress the figures in the *Pietà* in T-shirts, jeans, and Nike shoes.

Directors and conductors are secondary creators who realize their talents by reacting upon the work of the primary artist. Quite naturally, they wish to create in their own right by presenting an established work according to their interpretation of it. And often they really do improve on earlier treatments of a familiar masterpiece. Wieland Wagner's impressionist productions of his grandfather's *Ring of the Nibelungen* music dramas were inspired, resetting these operas from what could have been scenes from Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt's country estate into panoramas of light, shadow, color, and geometric form that represent in visual terms the sweeping music of which Owen Wister imagined the vast landscapes of the American West to be the embodiment. Unfortunately, when the secondary creation relies upon the principle of *aggiornamento* for its effect, interpretation is always at risk of becoming deconstruction.

The temptation in the operatic world to update the classic repertoire is closely associated with the embarrassment many modern patrons feel at their involvement with anything so archaic, so elitist, so passé as opera. I suspect, for instance, that the Metropolitan's current general manager wishes that Grand Opera could somehow be transformed into Grand Broadway, a hybrid perhaps of Franz Lehár and Busby Berkeley. Even

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so, artistic *aggiornamento* is not essentially an expression of cultural insecurity and the tyranny of artistic fashion. *Aggiornamento* is really an uncontrollable tick acquired from the world of progressive politics, with its vision of endless change carrying all of us forward into an imaginary utopian future.

CONSISTENT VIEWERS of PBS's *Masterpiece Theatre* over the past 30 years have probably noticed how, in the past decade or so, British producers, directors, and actors appear to have lost the ability to portray in a convincing way the old, aristocratic British society that even now is not yet dead. They fail, I think, because they do not really try; and they do not really try, because their hearts are not in their work. For a new generation, the Old Britain is the Bad Old Britain, even if they never really knew it. The old *Masterpiece Theatre—Jeeves and Wooster*, the two Lord Peter Wimsey series, Jeremy Brett's Sherlock Holmes—are works of nostalgic affection for a certain literature and a certain social period that are now lost irretrievably. The new people have no such affection for these things. And so they cannot match the wonderful documents their predecessors, not so long ago, created. For them, the world of P.G. Wodehouse, faithfully reproduced, is too painful—or perhaps simply too dull or irrelevant—to contemplate.

I say the matter is of a political nature because the modern political agendum has to do with redeeming cultural sensibility from the past and transferring it ahead in time—not to the present but to the future. Politics in the Western world has become a futuristic activity, so that it has got ahead of itself, chronologically speaking. Progressive politics has succeeded in progressing beyond history. This is why modern governments are so far out of step with their publics. Governments are aware of the discrepancy and are encouraged and flattered by it, rather than dismayed. In their minds, they are the enlightened vanguard whose mission and duty is to lead, persuade, and, if necessary, coerce the plebeian mass at their backs. The Obama administration is determined to establish an overwhelmingly unpopular system of government healthcare because it believes that, faced with a *fait accompli*, the mass of citizens will, in time, acquiesce in it. If the politicians are out of step with their constituencies, then at least they are ahead of them by that much. They are, they assure themselves, legislating for the future. But they are not legislating for the future; they are legislating in the future. The world they inhabit is not the real world of the present, but an imagined future world that is wholly the creation of the politicians themselves, beavering away in the present time.

Healthcare "reform" is actually healthcare preform, designed to address not the present-day United States but the United States of the future, when the government will have granted citizenship to 20 or 30 million illegal immigrants, repatriated tens of millions more of their nearest relatives, and established a policy of virtually open borders between the United States and much of the rest of the world. "You just have to decide if you want us to be a tomorrow country or a yesterday country," Bill Clinton declared at a rally in Boston for Martha Coakley, the unsuccessful Democratic candidate to succeed Edward Kennedy in the U.S. Senate. The "today country," ignored by Clinton, has an unemployment rate of ten percent; a popular majority hostile to amnesty and more immigrants; a balkanized population that is determinedly self-segregated; a bankrupt government; 20 million impoverished resident invaders; and the wreck of the world's best medical system, destroyed by four decades of government intrusion and mismanagement. But Washington lives in a postdated United States that has already taken its place in an achieved multicultural socialist world in which welfare states can coexist practically with open borders, budgets can be creatively jiggered forever, currency promiscuously printed out of thin air, and doctors created by federal fiat; the Ethiope can lie down with the Somali, the terrorist break bread with the security agent, and the Christian convert his church into a mosque, or else subside into a tolerant secularism whose only doctrines are those of the proposition nation and the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. Enoch Powell spoke with the mature and tutored wisdom of a statesman when he described that historical relic as one who anticipates future evils and acts to prevent them from coming to pass. The progressive politician, by contrast, foreseeing such evils, takes steps to accommodate them, while preparing to welcome their arrival as inevitable—so inevitable, indeed, as to have in some sense already occurred. The difference between the two is the difference between the historicist and the ideologue, the visionary and the fantasist, the sane man who dwells in time and the insane one who lives, to every intent and purpose, outside of it.

The progressive politician's illusion is both reflection and cause of the congenital dissatisfaction and discontent of mass democratic man, addicted to living on emotional, as well as financial, credit. "We live from hope to hope," Samuel Johnson said. A mental time machine is not what the good doctor had in mind. Nor Pascal: "We are not, we hope to be." ◆

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Too Good To Be Untrue

THE AMOEBA. You remember it from biology class; it's your long-lost relative. Don't believe it? Well, you're probably one of those pro-life Christian homeschooling losers. You don't play nice with others. You are socially maladjusted.

"Amoeba are essentially everywhere and have probably existed . . . long before the appearance of macroscopic animals," says the science department at the University of Edinburgh. "Throughout our entire existence therefore, we have lived in intimate association with amoebae. It is consequently no surprise that some amoeba have adapted to take advantage of us."

Twenty-four years ago, a pregnant lady encountered one of these pathogenic amoebae in the Philippines. This pesky single-celled creature, in the process of its attempt to take advantage of her, gave her an infection that put her into a coma. In an attempt to revive her, the Filipino doctors gave her medication that caused her placenta to separate from her uterus. So severe was this placental abruption that the awakened lady was given disturbing news: Your baby will likely be stillborn. Your best option is to have an abortion.

Now, if ever there was a case of a protect-the-life-and-health-of-the-mother abortion, this was it. She was married, yes, but she already had four children. Can't we all just agree that in this, the rarest of circumstances, it is best to take some sort of decisive action?

Then again, she and her husband were no mere tourists: They were missionaries. As Christians, abortion was not an option. So they resigned themselves to fate or, as they would say, the "will of God."

Who would win: mom or amoeba?

It turned out, the baby—a boy—was born healthy. He was so perfectly normal that, at age six, he took an interest in football. The family split time between their missions work and orphanage in the Philippines and their home in Jacksonville, Florida. As parents, they were the hands-on sort. Dad made the boy join his brothers and sisters in tending a half-acre garden. Mom homeschooled them.

The boy really, really liked football, and so it occurred to the parents: Why not see if the local public school would let him play on the team? As luck would have it, in 1996 the state of Florida had passed legislation allowing homeschoolers to play for a local high school of their choice in district. And it turned out the boy wasn't half bad. As a high-school junior and senior, he was named Player of the Year—of Florida. It helped that, as quarterback, he led his team to a state title in his senior year.

Despite being a maladjusted, evangelical, six-day-creationist homeschooler—did I mention that he pledged to maintain his virginity until marriage?—this 6'3" muscle-bound loser was coveted by several SEC football programs. As a freshman backup quarterback for the Florida Gators, he rushed for only 469 yards and eight touchdowns. At the end of that season (2006), in the BCS National Championship game, the Gators faced the no. 1 ranked Ohio State Buckeyes, led by Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith. The Gators routed the Buckeyes 41-14, and the boy threw and ran for a touchdown.

Next season, he became the starter and won the Heisman himself—the first underclassman ever to be so honored.

In 2008, his coach decided to split the load at QB since this wrecking ball of an abortion candidate didn't know when to quit. Coach should have known that from the start: In high school, he'd finished a game on a broken leg. Still, the boy led the Gators to another BCS Championship that year.

And then, just as you'd expect from a homeschooling nerdstrom, he announced that he was staying in school to complete his senior year, instead of entering the NFL draft, wherein he would likely have signed a contract worth something in the neighborhood of $40 million.

During his senior year, despite a season marred by injury, he managed to break the SEC's record for career touchdowns, formerly held by Herschel Walker, perhaps the greatest college running back ever to play. The Gators won the Sugar Bowl, and the boy produced a mere 533 yards of total offense—enough for a BCS record.

"A lot of times people have this stereotype of homeschoolers as not very athletic," the statistically stillborn boy remarked, after it was noted in an interview that he was the first homeschooler ever to win the Heisman. "It's like, go win a spelling bee or something . . . "

And yet, there are plenty of sports and cultural commentators who wish Tim Tebow would just go away, spelling bee or no. He's a painful reminder of all their blown stereotypes. Rest assured, if he ever slips up, they'll be there with their cameras and knowing grins. *Somehow*, it will have to have been wrong for him to win, in football and in life, on his first birthday. ◆

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The Bubble Economy

"WHY," Sheila Ramus asked, "if there are so many pro-lifers here, does Rockford have an abortion clinic?"

Sheila, my wife and I, and our pastor, Fr. Brian Bovee, were waiting to check in at Rockford's annual Pro-Life Banquet. An hour before the dinner was scheduled to begin, the Holy Family Room (yes, that is its name) in the basement of Holy Family Parish was almost full. The crowd reflected not only the number of pro-lifers in Rockford but their composition. Nineteen priests and many prominent physicians, lawyers, and businessmen joined almost two hundred others to raise money for Rockford's upcoming 40 Days for Life campaign. There were even a dozen or more politicians, though it was hard to get an accurate count because the Republicans all left early to attend the Lincoln Day Dinner, held nearly a month in advance of Lincoln's birthday. (Is nothing sacred anymore?)

Sheila's roots are in Rockford, but she has spent much of her life elsewhere. I explained that the local pro-life politicians themselves are part of the problem—once elected, not a single one of them has tried to shut down the euphemistically named Northern Illinois Women's Clinic, housed in a former public school.

To be fair, their failure to act isn't necessarily hypocrisy. Even those who are in a position to make life uncomfortable for the abortionist and his landlord, Wayne Webster (whose own child attended the school that Webster has turned into a chamber of horrors), lack the imagination to do so. During the 2001 mayoral election, I asked Denny Johnson, the pro-life Republican candidate, why he didn't use his position on the board of directors of Rockford's largest hospital to get the abortionist's privileges revoked. Richard Ragsdale, now several years dead but then one of the most notorious abortionists in the country, didn't perform abortions at SwedishAmerican, Johnson replied, so why revoke his privileges? (He didn't suggest that Ragsdale's privileges couldn't be revoked; he simply couldn't see what good it would do.)

Similarly, when I asked Johnson to pledge to use zoning restrictions to try to close down the abortuary, he admitted that the idea might work, but that he had never thought of it. Yet he refused to make such a pledge.

Politicians seem always at the ready to use the law to protect abortion, however. Just ten days after the Pro-Life Banquet, and within a few days of the 37th anniversary of *Roe* v. *Wade*, the *Rockford Register Star* reported that city attorney Jennifer Cacciapaglia had drafted a "bubble zone" ordinance that would make it illegal for the pro-lifers who pray at the abortuary every Wednesday and Friday (the two days that it is open) to come closer than 8 feet to any person who is within 100 feet of the entrance to Turner School. The ordinance was requested by Karen Elyea, the alderman in whose district the abortuary lies, ostensibly (the *Register Star* reported) as a response to "128 calls for service from police and 64 complaints filed at the clinic's address in the past two years."

The Rockford Pro-Life Initiative notes that the majority of those calls have not been made by mothers entering Turner School, or even by those who accompany them, but by pro-lifers filing complaints against a counterdemonstrator who spends his time harassing those gathered in prayer. (Most of the rest of the calls have been made by the counterdemonstrator.) Elyea told the *Register Star* that she is concerned about the "'heated interaction' between protesters and clinic staff and patients," but the ordinance is likely to lead to greater tensions, as different people standing at different vantage points will disagree about whether the eight-foot "bubble zone" has been breached. And that will mean more calls to the police, not fewer.

Our current mayor, an independent, is a practicing Catholic, and I have heard him speak eloquently and movingly about his pro-life convictions. To his credit, Mayor Morrissey opposes the "bubble zone," which will come before the Rockford City Council in a few weeks.

The real purpose of the ordinance is to prevent pro-lifers from handing out brochures on fetal development and alternatives to abortion, including material from the local pregnancy-care center, which has assisted many mothers who have decided to bring their children to term. During last Lent's 40 Days for Life campaign, the weekly number of abortions fell by over 20 percent, and it continued to fall throughout the year.

If this year's campaign were to result in a similar decrease, the abortuary might well have to close its doors forever. Undoubtedly, Alderman Elyea is concerned about the loss of a local business. But adding a few more folks to the ranks of Rockford's unemployed would, in this case, be a very good thing. ◆

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The Labour Minders

by Thomas McMahon

GORDON BROWN'S media handlers have taken to ensuring that he frequently appears in front of the country's journalists while in the company of children. This is presumably intended to soften his public image. However, when a 50-year-old man with a tendency to overdo the stage makeup, who suffers a series of bizarre facial tics and vocal stutters and grins fixedly over apparent signs of depression, starts appearing regularly in the company of children, he seems more like a closeted clown just itching to get his suit off, the big yellow pants on, and the balloon animals out.

The situation for Brown's party is truly dire, with even their historic fortresses crumbling. The Scots have been seduced by the Scottish Nationalist Party, which looks likely to break the stranglehold the Labour Mafia have held for decades over the most socialist part of the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, current predictions are that Wales, another core Labour region, will give a majority of its votes to the Conservatives for the first time in the era of universal suffrage. Nationally, Labour polled 15 percent in the elections to the European Soviet last spring. They are currently polling in the low to mid 20's. At those levels Labour will be wiped out, barring a few pockets of resistance in the former industrial cities, and it's anyone's guess whether their true level of support is closer to the European number.

Just before their last party conference of the Parliament, the government announced new child-protection plans that will require all those coming into regular contact with children in any semiofficial capacity to register with a national database. "Regular" could mean as little as a few times per year, and "semiofficial" covers everyone from cleaners at sports facilities to a parent who gives lifts to a group of kids in the morning. Anyone wishing to help out with after-school activities would be required to register.

The details of the plans are truly wicked. Upon application for membership on the list, opinions would be sought on the suitability of the candidate. Acquaintances and workmates may be asked for their comments, internet forums and networking sites may be trawled, "lifestyles" would be examined. Even the most baseless accusation would be recorded in perpetuity on a central state database. There would be no investigation to determine whether the accusation was malicious. There would be no requirement that accusations be proven in court.

It was the Soham murders, the killing of two young girls in 2002, that led to the proposal of this paranoid legislation. Ian Huntley was the boyfriend of Maxine Carr, a teaching assistant at the school of Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells. The two girls visited Carr's house to commiserate with her for not getting a full-time job at the school. Carr was away that day, and Huntley was at her home alone. After killing the two girls and disposing of their bodies, he appeared on TV on numerous occasions in the following days as a vocal member of the rescue operation, making passionate appeals to the supposed kidnapper to release the girls. After his guilty verdict, it emerged that he had previous convictions in another part of the country, and despite this he had been employed as a school caretaker.

Huntley was not employed at the school of the two girls; it was his girlfriend who worked there. Consequently, the new legislation, aimed at tightening rules on those who come into contact with children through schools and other organizations, would have been entirely irrelevant to the events at Soham. Ian Huntley could have been an accountant or an astronaut and ended up in the same situation. Indeed, it is not hard to imagine a case in which the two girls knocked on the wrong door by mistake, and Huntley happened to be at that address. If the legislation were truly aimed at preventing a similar occurrence, it would demand the vetting of the partners of all those who come into official contact with children.

While it is desirable to check that convicted child abusers are not employed in childcare and education, it is mistaken to believe that society can be regulated in such a way as to diminish substantially the risk to children of being assaulted by strangers. Those who have this evil in their heart will always be among us, and we cannot restrain children from strangers to the extent that it is impossible for those ill-wishers to find an opportunity. Children will break the strictest curfews, and perverts will find a way to be around when they do. Either that, or the occasion will drop in one's lap, as it did for Ian Huntley.

If the policy is irrelevant to the circumstances of the case that inspired it, what is its real purpose? At roughly the same time that the policy was revealed by the papers, it emerged that Labour had introduced laws making it illegal for friends to arrange to look after one another's children without informing the authorities. Two female police officers had been censured for allowing each other to look after their children while they were at work. Unbeknownst to them, the educational watchdog Ofsted required anyone who looks after a child for more than two

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hours at a time or for more than 14 days in a year to be registered. The state now wants a say on whether you leave Johnny with the neighbor when you have a few errands to run. In fact, the state wants to speak to your neighbor—what interest does she have in your child? Says Detective Constable Shepherd, one of the unlicensed babysitters,

> The girls were together all day and grew up like sisters. I couldn't believe it when an inspector turned up on my doorstep and said I was running an illegal childminding business. I thought there had been some mistake.

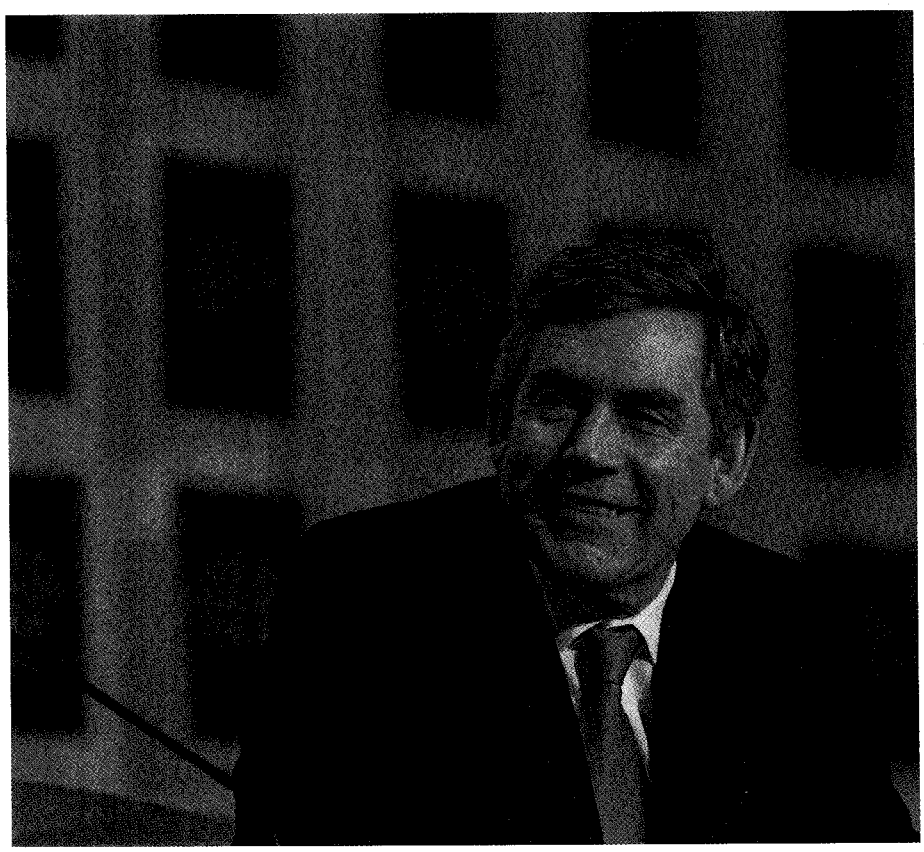
It is not being entirely facetious to say that Labour thinks of children as allies against their parents. The effect of introducing such legislation and guidelines for parenting—such as the government guidelines stating exactly what physical and mental development should have been achieved at any point in an infant's life—is to make the relationship between parent and child fundamentally a legal one and, therefore, one in which the bonds of love and biology are secondary. A good parent is one who follows the rules. Someone who follows the rules is as good as, if not better than, someone who loves you. By undermining the natural affection between parents and children Labour is imposing itself as a towering third in the relationship, a source of legal redress for children against their parents, a more senior parent to be trusted above the puny human.

This is reminiscent of the disastrous socialist experiment in Russia. The truly terrifying thing about the Stalinist terror was the illogicality of it. There was no way to protect yourself from the authorities because they were entirely irrational. Have a relative abroad? You're a suspect. Have a second cousin married to someone shot in 1937? You're a suspect. Once knew someone who has ended up in jail? You're a suspect. The idea of including unproved allegations injects a similar poisonous uncertainty into the relationship between the citizen and the state, and into the normal healthy relationships between adults and children.

The Soviet experiment failed because all normal people are horrified by state intrusion into close personal relationships. If Labour's plans are implemented people will simply not form relationships with other people's children, with their neighbors' families, with the families of their children's schoolmates, simply because of fear. It should be added that, under the plans, no one would be entitled to see his file. And what will happen when the government closes its dirty claws on the reports that show most violence against children is committed by family members in the home? What a hell on earth they are preparing for us.

Whether a change of government produces substantial change in policy remains to be seen; the government-in-waiting is currently discussing which television celebrities to appoint to the upper house of our legislature. This does not bode well for their seriousness. Meanwhile, at least we have the spectacle of a government disintegrating to enjoy. As a probable defeat looms, Labour's leaders are reverting to their instinctive authoritarian nastiness, previously covered up with the whore's paint of middle-class respectability under Tony Blair. The party's over, but a few drunks are refusing to leave the kitchen, careering around in a conga dance. At the head of the procession springs the jester Gordon Brown, part Pied Piper, part Saturn devouring his young, pilled-up to the eyeballs and dribbling, jabbering on about saving the world.

Thomas McMahon is a writer from Norfolk, England, currently based in Northern Italy.



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Ave Maria

by Sean Scallon

TAMMY ORMSON GAVE much of herself to Catholic education, both as a student and as a teacher. And yet so much was taken from her.

Ormson lost her *alma mater*, Mount Scenario College, when the Ladysmith, Wisconsin, school closed a few years back because of financial trouble.

She then lost the school at which she was a teacher and principal for 16 years, St. John the Baptist in Plum City, Wisconsin, when it was closed in 2006 by the diocese of La Crosse.

At the time, Ormson wasn't the principal. She had left St. John's in 2003 to run her family's grocery store in nearby Spring Valley. Yet the shock at St. John's closure could be felt all the way up County Highway CC. "It was a surprise when I heard that it was closing," Ormson told me. "It was a good school. It wasn't in any kind of financial trouble. I and many others couldn't really understand what was going on. And it hurt personally to see a place you gave so much of yourself to simply not exist anymore."

Yet the closure of St. John's opened a path for Ormson, one that brought her back south to Plum City to take charge of a new private academy in the old St. John's school building.

Many St. John's parents still wanted their children to attend a Catholic school, and they needed someone to help lead the effort to create one. Ormson's teaching experience and her background as a principal, Plum City native, and high-school coach made her the perfect candidate.

Former St. John's parents and students approached Ormson about leading the new school, and her name gave the effort instant credibility. The group investigated similar schools throughout the state to see how they were run. Then they approached the Most Rev. Jerome Listecki, bishop of the diocese of La Crosse, to seek his blessing.

"We're not a part of the diocese's education system, but we wanted a school that teaches in the Catholic tradition, and we needed the bishop's approval to be listed as such," Ormson said. "I had never dealt with him before, none of us had, and there could have been some bitter feelings about what happened to St. John's. But we had a good, open-minded discussion with him. We were very well prepared and made a very good presentation about what we wanted to do with our new school, and he approved it."

AVE MARIA ACADEMY opened in the fall of 2007. It has a preschool of eight students known as the Little Lambs, and eight students are currently enrolled in grades K-4. Children come from Plum City, but also from Durand and Spring Valley. Ormson is the only full-time teacher on staff, with a half-time preschool teacher. The remaining staff, from the secretary to the custodian, are all parent volunteers. "We couldn't have Ave Maria Academy without the parents being involved with it," Ormson said. "That's how much it means to them. They want a traditional Catholic education for their students, and they'll give of their time to make sure the school runs properly."

Besides time, Ave Maria has received such necessary donations as educational supplies, books, computers, science equipment, desks, and other learning materials. Parents help to shape the core curriculum of Ave Maria, which currently includes Spanish, sign language, and computer education. Students participate in weekly Mass at St. John's, and they visit the residents at the Plum City Care Center. "It's like a little family," Ormson said. "The other day all of us, parents and students, went to lunch together. That family atmosphere is what we offer along with small class sizes, a Catholic-based education, and a chance for parents to have close involvement in their child's education."

The 45-year-old mother of two (who recently became a grandmother) finds what she does now is not much different from what she did at St. John's. "St. John's was a small school as well, and we combined grades just like we do here," Ormson said. "The kids are not taught at the same time in the same subjects. The classes aren't as big, but we had a 25 percent growth rate from when we first started to now, and other interested families around are taking a look at us. Perhaps one nice difference between Ave Maria and St. John's is not having to do all the diocesan paperwork, which leaves more time for teaching."

Ormson was flattered and grateful when she was approached to lead the effort to start Ave Maria Academy, but it was also a new way for her to get back to doing what she loves. "That's the way life is sometimes," she said. "Things change, and there are new paths for you to take, and some of them lead right back to where you started."

That could be true for other Catholics or anyone wishing for a traditional way of life and a traditional education. Perhaps such small schools as Ave Maria are the first steps on the path back.

Sean Scallon is a freelance writer and journalist living in Arkansaw, Wisconsin.

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The purpose of this book is to rekindle debate in the United States about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. . . . It is not normal that the discourse on the dispute is far more dynamic, varied, and intelligent in other countries—including Israel—than in America.

—From the Foreword

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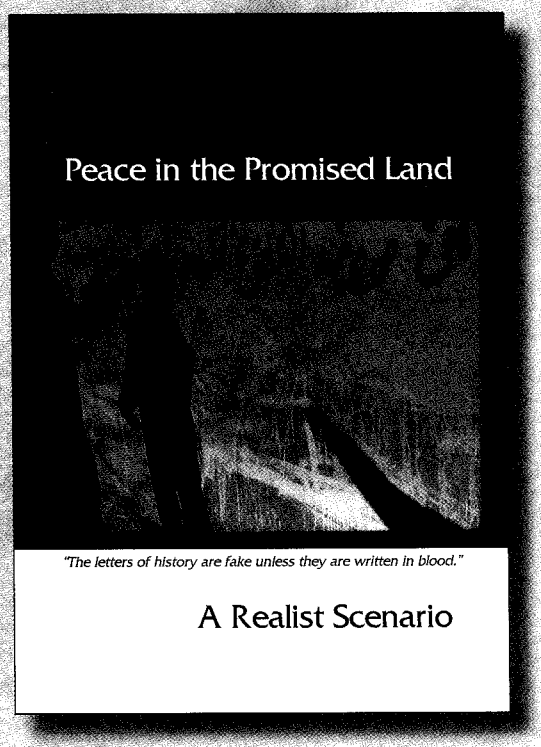
edited by Srdja Trifkovic



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PEAC

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Roger D. McGrath

The White Man's Burden

Take up the White Man's burden—
The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

THE HAVOC WREAKED by the Haitian earthquake reminded me of Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden," originally published in *McClure's Magazine* in 1899. Kipling believed that Western man had a duty to uplift and modernize the uncivilized world but seemed resigned to the ultimate failure of such efforts. Some saw his poem only as a justification for colonialism, coming as it did at the peak of the rush for overseas possessions. The poem is much richer and deeper than that, and full of irony.

None of this was examined when I was in college during the 1960's. Although I had professors who mockingly referred to its title, the poem itself was not read. Students only understood they should repudiate the notion of the White Man's Burden as ethnocentric and condescending, yet one of the highest callings on campus was volunteering for the Peace Corps.

This same kind of contradiction remains with us today, and there is no better example than the two-century disaster that is Haiti, the country that occupies the western third of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. The French first arrived on Hispaniola as pirates early in the 17th century, settling along the island's western coast. The buccaneers not only raided but developed tobacco plantations. More French arrived, and sugar cane joined tobacco as a cash crop. By 1790 there were 30,000 French, 30,000 free mulattoes, several thousand free blacks, and half a million black slaves in what the French called Saint-Domingue. It was the wealthiest French colony in the New World, profits then coming principally from sugar, coffee, and indigo.

In 1791 a slave revolt erupted in the northern portion of Saint-Domingue and spread in fits and spurts. The French not only confronted the rebels with military force but, in an effort to gain allies, granted more civil rights to the mulattoes and free blacks. Although the Jacobin government abolished slavery in the colonies in 1794, the rebellion continued, now concerned with factional strife and independence. The involvement of the Spanish and British complicated the situation. Nonetheless, by the summer of 1795, Toussaint L'Ouverture, a well-educated free black, had risen to leadership of the rebel forces and was in control of two thirds of Saint-Domingue. Much of his war was now fought against various factions of mulattoes, who were badly outnumbered and ultimately nearly exterminated. Emerging victorious in 1801, L'Ouverture declared himself emperor-for-life.

By now Napoleon ruled France and, not sharing Jacobin sentiments about abolition and colonial independence, sent 20,000 troops to depose L'Ouverture. The French force won the battles but lost most of its men to yellow fever. L'Ouverture was captured, sent to a prison in France, and soon died of tuberculosis. Back in Saint-Domingue, Jean Jacques Dessalines defeated the disease-decimated French force and established the new nation of Haiti in 1804. Some 24,000 French settlers who didn't escape to New Orleans in time were butchered. Dessalines became the new emperor-for-life but was assassinated in 1806.

HAITI DISINTEGRATED into warring factions, and the infrastructure built by the French deteriorated rapidly. Periodically during his reign, which began in 1818, Jean Pierre Boyer, a mulatto who had been one of the revolutionary leaders during the 1790's, enforced a limited degree of unity and stability. The American Colonization Society was encouraged and sent 6,000 manumitted blacks there in 1824. Nearly all of them quickly returned to the United States, aghast at conditions in Haiti. Boyer was deposed in a coup in 1843, and more than 30 coups followed. The Marines landed in 1888 and again in 1914 to restore order. In 1915 the United States began an occupation of Haiti, enforced by the Marines and lasting until 1934. Several Marine legends served there, including Smedley Butler, Dan Daly, and Chesty Puller. The United States poured millions into Haiti, building schools, hospitals, harbors, roads, and bridges.

As soon as we left the Haitians reverted to their old ways, characterized by indolence, voodoo, rape, mutilations, murder, and brutal despots such as "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier and their death squads. Earthquake or no, Haitians survive through foreign aid and the work of hundreds of private U.S. and European charities. The White Man's Burden. ◆

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Another Fake Rolexsky!

OF LATE I have been writing a good deal for Russian publications, including *Snob*, which has now given me a weekly column. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that my mother tongue would provide me with something like material comfort. A thorny path of spiritual improvement? Possibly. A way of finding better vodka, cheaper caviar, and less liberated women? Certainly. But a source of income? You must be joking.

As a columnist I scour the Russian press, always on the lookout for the softest bit of conformity's underbelly, and recently I came upon the Russian version of the British social glossy *Tatler*, launched in Moscow with great fanfare as the key to high life in the inscrutable West. In general, one of the problems with the world today is that there are many more keys than there are locks, but yet again this has stopped no one from inventing a new one, with the predictable result that the Russian version of English fashionable society is at first glance as pointless as the Condé Nast version of it. But the charade has a deeper meaning.

Over the Christmas holidays I opened a random issue of the Russian magazine and saw a London banker friend of mine, Chinese by birth, described in the caption under his photograph as "a star of action films with eastern combat scenes"—in other words, a successor to the cult reputation of Bruce Lee. In the photograph, Andy Wong was pictured attending the 300th anniversary dinner of *Tatler* last November, an occasion in the staging of which Condé Nast, by all accounts, spared no expense.

Now, an interesting fact about Andy is that, during the last 20 years, he has been just about the only person in London to give a private ball—a Chinese New Year extravaganza for 600 guests, representing the *monde* or, in the eyes of those who were not asked, the *demimonde*—in no way connected with charity. Let us recall that the introduction in Britain of the obligatory American-style politically correct notion of "charity" into private merrymaking corresponded with the rise of Princess Diana, who, in a creative tandem with *Tatler*, was responsible for securing false pretenses a place at high table. Land mines, publishing, equality of the sexes—no subject was too vast to escape the princess's charitable attention. In short, Diana did for hypocrisy what Churchill has done for cigars.

NOT THAT DURING these past 20 years *Tatler* has treated Andy's annual event with the hostility that is the common reward of politically incorrect initiatives. Quite to the contrary, it has salivated over it with the same omnivorous enthusiasm with which a swine, notwithstanding the proverb, would welcome a scattering of pearls. Hence for the Russian edition to mistake the controversial proponent of gallant festivities for Bruce Lee is as absurd as, in our world, mistaking Anthony Powell for Jeffrey Archer.

Confronted with their own suspicions that in the Russian *Tatler*, as the Italians say, *qualcosa non va*, socially disoriented Muscovite wits began a long lament in the press, whose theme, reduced to its essentials, ran something along these lines: "Of course this magazine is rubbish! Of course it's an impostor! Why oh why do we Russians always get stuck with imitations? Why does every Tom, Dick, and Harry who comes here want to sell us a fake Rolex? Woe to our unsuspecting compatriots who should think that this alleged *Tatler* is even a shadow of the great British original! Addison and Steele! Princess Diana and Sir Winston Churchill! *Caveat emptor*!"

So I wrote a column, explaining that Andy Wong is a banker and the British *Tatler* is as much of an impostor as the Russian version, only with fewer howlers. Which makes it rather worse, if one stops to reflect that a slick impostor is more, not less, of a nuisance than a sloppy one. I further explained that traditional British society had never had need for the expert guide that *Tatler* pretends it is, for the simple reason that a social order based on aristocratic succession was transparent and held together by common truths, unlike the new social order, based on money, which is by definition opaque and held together by convenient misrepresentations. Taste and style—to say nothing of origin, background, worth, and value—were never mysteries worth unraveling while racehorses were still bought for guineas.

What a storm of indignation has followed! It is as though I said in Stalin's time that the Soviet Army is not the greatest fighting machine on earth or that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is not the home of the brave from sea to shining sea. You know the rest. Conformity, like a mighty river, winds its way to the sea in every language. ◆

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Don Quixote at West Point

by Robert D. Hickson

A RECENT INCIDENT at West Point involving my wife and our little daughter has given us much to ponder. The initial responses, and later silences, of the military authorities were both surprising and perplexing. I became even more reflective and pensive, however, after my own well-informed and honest and very candid West Point classmates further illuminated my deficient understanding and corrected my illusions by their own much more deeply discerning comments.

What might a Don Quixote himself have thought, said, and done—in light of his chivalrous naiveté and generous (though often cynically mocked) illusions and his own tradition-mindedness—had he been present there and encountered this "Tremendous Trifle" and "Prodigy" in his path? For, as we shall see, it was a sudden and surprising challenge, indeed: a somewhat staining adventure with a Very Model of a Modern M.P. Soldier. And soon there came his Defenders, his moral supporters and protective sympathizers.

How would Cervantes himself—or G.K. Chesterton in his *Return of Don Quixote* (1927)—have presented this scene and some of its implications? For, despite our reputed modern freedoms, it is still the case that we have as many Masters as we have Moral Vices. However, moral vices may certainly produce illusions of autonomy and freedom.

ON A WEDNESDAY MORNING in late October 2009, my wife and I made a brief visit to the West Point Post Exchange with our little daughter. It is a place where cadets and military families with their young children often visit. Shortly after our arrival, I turned to find my wife and suddenly faced a scene I had never before witnessed in a military store, especially not at West Point. A hobo was there, some 30 yards away, and walking sluggishly into the store more or less in my direction. He was plodding along vaguely and maundering still when he passed me nearby. I watched him all that time, stunned in thought.

This seeming vagrant and clochard had as part of his attire a gray Army shirt of official issue, in incongruous combination with big baggy pants, either cut-off trousers or elongated Bermuda shorts. What a picture!

But that was only the beginning. He had a hat on with a beak, but it was not turned completely to the rear as one often sees with fashionably shabby adolescents. Rather, the hat was turned sideways toward his left ear, bending the ear down and curving it outwardly. This touch imparted to his visage an especially goofy look. That goofiness was further amplified by a large drink he was vacantly slurping, as he further shambled on.

As he passed, he saw me gazing at him in silence, and he proceeded to stare at me. Still stunned, I remained standing where I was, but I turned to watch him. From what I then saw in his eyes, it even looked as if he were on drugs.

Since the man looked too old to be a military dependent of one of the Army families residing at or visiting West Point, I decided, after some minutes, to approach him and ask if he was himself in the military. He answered in the affirmative. I then asked, "May I know what unit you are in?" He responded, "The Military Police."

I did not then ascertain, nor afterward reliably discover, his rank. I only knew that he was one of the guardians.

Things deteriorated rapidly. I formally identified myself and then asked his name. He became petulant and surly: "Why do you want to know my name?"

I replied, "I wish to speak with your superiors in the provost marshal's office about your mixed and shabby dress and also about your deportment and demeanor."

At once he became more brazen and defiant and suddenly expressed himself with a sneer and a smirk of contempt: "Hey man, you're harassin' me."

"I beg your pardon," I answered. "I ask you for your name, and you call it harassment? You must be a real stalwart. Have you no self-respect?"

Constable Clochard reached into his baggy pants and pulled out his cell phone. "Hey," he informed his friends in the Military Police, "some guy is harassin' me over here. I'm at the PX. Come on over."

ASSURED THAT HIS COMRADES were *en route*, he became even more insolent. He gathered together in a little cluster with a few younger female employees of the store, muttering and grumbling among them. But he kept his distance until two junior sergeants of the Military Police arrived. One immediately took the approaching and welcoming constable by the arm and went with him to a more distant part of the store. The other young sergeant stayed with me. He was very polite, but his own words and, soon, his effective acts of omission were even more shocking to me than those of the querulous constable himself.

"Sir, what's your problem?" the young sergeant asked.

As I started to tell him about the behavior and appearance of the constable, he interrupted me. "Sir, I don't see your problem. I dress like this, too, when I'm off duty." Although I attempted to discuss further his colleague's disturbing fragility and acute rudeness, the young sergeant, though still polite, had had

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enough. There was no danger, he concluded, of any violence, and thus he and his partner wished to depart. The case was finished—on their terms.

Aside from a few ongoing glowering looks and sneers, Constable Clochard kept his distance after his comrades' departure. Yet we had one final act of his baseness to face.

It was raining, so I came with my car to the entrance of the Post Exchange to fetch my wife and daughter. Unexpectedly, the constable reemerged and proceeded to copy down our car's license-plate number, after which he sauntered off again.

My usually calm and poised wife was quite troubled by the constable's implicitly threatening act. She feared some indirect form of revenge.

WE DECIDED TO VISIT the office of the West Point provost marshal himself, to report these acts of dishonor and disrespect. We thought that the traditional ethos of honor of the West Point Military Police would informally correct the constable's abuses. We were wrong.

We met with the executive officer and the senior sergeant in the provost marshall's office. The sergeant did most of the talking. Both were polite, and the sergeant asked me to write and give him my e-mail address as soon as possible, so that he could tell me how he handled the incident. The senior sergeant then said to me straightaway that current Army regulations regrettably permit mixed dress "off duty," so there was nothing he could do there. But as to the shabby constable's conduct—his open defiance and disrespect—the sergeant would attend to that at once. He was also polite with my wife, and even appeared to understand her anxiety about the soldier's final rudeness and implicit threat.

That evening, I wrote to the senior sergeant and gave him my current e-mail address. I did not hear from him for two weeks, though I wrote to him twice. When he finally wrote back, he was so vague about what he had discovered and had purportedly done by way of correction, that I wrote him two more messages of inquiry, one of which (on November 11, Veterans Day) was a somewhat long and detailed description of what had occurred, a sort of Incident Report and Memorandum for the Record.

In response to my first message, the senior sergeant, copying his replies to his superior officers, wrote only a brief but indignant note—addressing me as "Mr. Hickson." He instructed me that I should trust him to have done what was proper and altogether fitting, stressing, moreover, that the constable is "an Iraq combat-veteran" who has "proudly served his country," and that he would tell me no more than that. The case was over.

WHEN I CONTACTED some of my trusted classmates from West Point and told them the entire story, I was told that the problem extends beyond the West Point Military Police. When cadets themselves are "off duty," it is often difficult to say who is a cadet and who is a vagrant or suspect gangster. Moreover, a dignified woman in the West Point Post Exchange had told me that the dress and conduct of the constable was representative. Cadets and other members of the military increasingly dress and act in such a manner. "This is not, by far, the way it used to be," she said. "But people don't seem to care anymore." There is a pervading indifference, as if to say: "I don't care, and you don't matter."

My classmates informed me that the ethos at the academy is now so changed that a recent superintendent invited a very young, potential financial donor to stay overnight at his prestigious military quarters, while a decorated veteran general from World War II was put up at a nearby hotel. One of my other good classmates—not at all a curmudgeon, much less a pessimist or a fatalist—said, "Robert, the Corps has, and the Army has"—cadet slang for "the standards of the Corps and the Corps of Cadets itself have gone to hell, and the Army has, too." I had not expected to hear these words from such a senior and distinguished man.

In any case, we shall not recover the flower of chivalry, much less its fuller fruits, unless we rediscover and are nourished by its roots, including its deeper religious roots. But as James Burnham writes, "To be defeated after losing well does not always lose so much as not to have fought." Don Quixote would agree. (And, along with his courage amid the surrounding mockery and cynicism, he further displayed "the wisdom of his naivete," especially by his prompt and sustaining desire for "chivalrous magnanimity" and for "a new order of *voluntary* nobility.") As Chesterton once said, only a live thing can swim against the stream. Let us not be a drifter, nor a slothful tramp. As my Catholic Special Forces team sergeant once said to me: "Sir, let us flame out, not rust out!"

To see the place where I became a man show signs of dissolution does deeply affect the heart. To feel that one is an absurd and injurious anachronism is not a thing easily borne in a manly way, with integrity and true fortitude. I miss being part of a living, active tradition, especially in these late years of disrupted traditions.

As Burnham once said, man is nourished "by social experience acting through time—that is, by tradition." That is especially true of the virtuous and deeply tested tradition of the Long Gray Line, where once there was a sincere faith in this tradition as a living and continuous force.

Robert D. Hickson was a professor of strategic and cultural studies and national security at the Joint Special Operations University, U.S. Special Operations Command.

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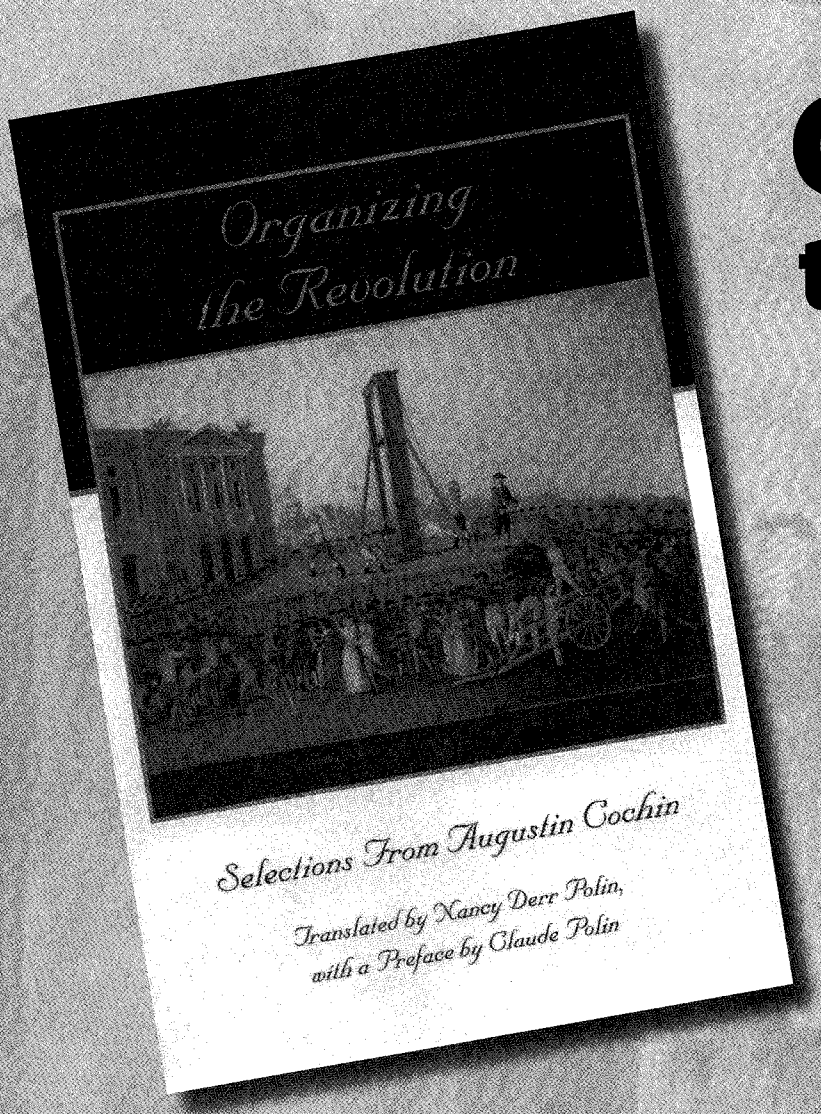

Organizing the Revolution

Selections from Augustin Cochin

Translated by
Nancy Derr Polin

with a Preface by
Claude Polin

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The New Yorker Under the Glass

by Catharine Savage Brosman

THE FIRST ISSUE of *The New Yorker* (February 21, 1925) showed on its cover a dandy in top hat, high collar, and morning suit gazing through his monocle at a butterfly. The drawing is reproduced yearly, and butterflies became a cover motif. Whatever tastes, affectations, or snobbery the artist, Rea Irvin, wanted to suggest, it is time now to turn the monocle on the magazine and subject it to scrutiny.

What the glass reveals is a very disappointing publication, if one judges by former standards. Though there had been modifications in the early years, as the magazine ceased to deal chiefly in humor and published more serious journalism and fiction, and though changes in editorship (from Harold Ross to William Shawn to Robert Gottlieb) inevitably introduced slightly different tones, there was no new departure until it was redesigned by Tina Brown, its editor from 1992 until 1998. The aim was apparently to be modish, and that meant campy, vulgar, even outrageous. Brown fired respected contributors (some left on their own), hired new people, including fashion photographer Richard Avedon, and adopted a policy of *épater le bourgeois*. In the process, according to *Gawker.com*, she incurred losses of $70 million. Generally, the same editorial positions have been maintained by her successor, David Remnick, whose staff includes several of her appointees.

For decades, my late friend Evelyn Payne read everything in *The New Yorker*, every week, except the football articles; she would not read it now at all, given the assaults on good taste, or what the radical cultural critics call (approvingly) "transgression of boundaries." Taste and fashion, it might be argued, are culturally insignificant—clothing fads, slang, dark nail polish, casual furniture. In fact, many such matters are important: Choices in manners, speech, dress, music, literature, and film reveal us and form us—and affect others, including children, edifying them or perhaps leading them astray. That is, taste is an aspect of propriety and, ultimately, morality. It's not, as Fat Albert would have said, that *The New Yorker* has no taste; what it has is bad taste. True, bad taste can be just slovenliness; but when is that desirable? Frequently, violation of taste is intended to offend (and thus attract attention as daring), as in the mouths or on the bodies of rebellious children and youth and in the work of many writers and painters. The nude photographs in *The New Yorker* under the new dispensation were surely meant to create chic scandal—a pseudo-sophisticated nose-thumbing—and raise subscription numbers. As for the foul language in every issue, the wacky behavior, the intimate details, they are inspired, one might charitably suppose, by a realist impulse—to portray people as they really act and speak. Some people, that is. I am not unaware of the arguments for Zolaesque realism in fiction and reporting; but is near-photographic imitation necessary in a magazine of broad interest, widely circulated, with 47 issues per year?

In addition, the general design of the magazine is no longer attractive. There are numerous sidebars, gaudy cartoons in large panels, and messy pages with eye-distracting fonts and illustrations, as though it were directed to readers with attention deficit. Infantilism is not absent elsewhere, especially in short items in *The Talk of the Town*. While, unlike explicitly experimental magazines, *The New Yorker* does not excoriate previous models of literary worth, the latter seem to be of little concern. The fiction strikes me as generally mediocre, often dealing with jaundiced urbanites whose tales are tedious; sometimes it approaches soft porn. (A story by Tim Gautreaux in the June 22, 2009, issue was a pleasing exception.) Similarly, the poetry is usually mediocre, sometimes incredibly bad; witness Michael Dickman's poem in the December 14, 2009, issue, a juvenile product echoing bad Surrealism. (The poems of Richard Wilbur, C.K. Williams, and a few others deserve praise, however.) Since 2004, a pop-music column by Sasha Frere-Jones, who previously wrote for the *Village Voice*, has brought another type of vulgarity into the magazine. What drives pop music anyhow is mostly seriality, not personal taste; girls scream and swoon at performances because others do, and CDs sell on the basis that other consumers like them. Generally, the worse, the better.

Facts are still checked in *The New Yorker*, presumably, but I found a significant error (December 8, 2008), by which Sartre's escape from a German prison camp is cited to support the ease of such evasions. In fact, he did not escape; by displaying his bad eye and falsifying his military papers to show unfitness for service, he got out with the Germans' knowledge. Another departure from the earlier *New Yorker* is degraded grammar. Surely, previous staff members, famous for their emphasis on high standards of language, especially Eleanor Gould, who occupied the position of grammarian at the magazine from 1945 until 1999, would recoil in horror from what one finds today. A frequent error, doubtless house style now, is the use of the objective case after forms of *to be*. "It was him," "It's me" are the rule, no matter who has written the piece (including, doubtless, some who know better). Then there are errors in syntax. From the pen of David Denby, the movie critic, comes this misuse of *whom*: "a woman twenty years older—a stern, secretive, yet hungry partner whom

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the boy doesn't realize is a former concentration camp guard." Elsewhere, a *who* is omitted, as though the writer or copyeditor could not follow the sentence.

Plural subjects (often linked by *and*) sometimes have singular verbs, as in "the combined *salaries* . . . *was* . . . " and "Operation Iron Triangles *rules* of engagement—which, they had said, *was* . . . " One finds *snuck* instead of *sneaked*, and, from the pen of John Lahr, the following solecism, perhaps immigrant-influenced: "only a month in New York" (for "who had been in New York for only a month . . . "). There are errors in French. The offices probably have a dictionary already; someone should learn how to use it. Then there are illogical or badly worded sentences. The sort of error that traffic reporters make during early morning newscasts appears: "If you go to the Cézanne room at the Musée d'Orsay . . . the array of masterpieces you'll find along the back wall were all painted at the end of his career." Ah, but if I don't go to that museum, what, then, about those masterpieces? Now, these errors do not bother all *New Yorker* readers, presumably; many won't recognize them, while others would say, "So what?" I may be taken for a pretentious pedant. Does it make a difference how one writes? Yes. Language is both queen and servant of true culture. The adulterated language of today reflects depravity—the deliberate rejection of discrimination and erosion of standards.

In matters of behavior *The New Yorker* shows tolerance and permissiveness. Its interviewers seem to attach no blame to petty crime, sale and use of illegal drugs, pornography and its peddlers, sadism, "drag" and transgendering, or other deviancy—these are just phenomena. Leslie Mann, a filmmaker interviewed breezily, talks casually about "smoking pot" in school and the use of marijuana among friends and in her husband's films. In fiction and profiles from the worlds of fashion and film, the magazine celebrates what I shall call "the homosexual life." It goes without saying that abortion is never questioned; in a *Talk of the Town* column Jeffrey Toobin complained (in connection with the Stupak amendment) that "abortion services are being treated like a second-class form of medicine." The choice of plays and movies reviewed (for instance, Madonna's *Filth and Wisdom*) suggests a bias toward what is tawdry, shocking, vile, criminal. If this is almost all that stage and screen have to offer, at least the morally objectionable material could be noted as such. (Literature is full of rascals and criminals, but usually they are not treated with benign indifference; Macbeth comes to a bad end, and Madame Bovary poisons herself.)

The magazine is thus without prejudices, except, of course, against conservatives and traditionalists of all stripes and other wrongheaded people. No mockery of "disadvantaged groups" would be allowed, but Texans may be ridiculed, along with unre-

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constructed Southerners, even the South in general. California figures and phenomena, some on the loony side, fare better. Although Saul Steinberg's *View of the World From 9th Avenue* (1976) suggested that the rest of the globe was almost insignificant, the magazine is now entirely enfeoffed to the great powers of globalism and internationalism. In leafing through issues of the past year or so, I find few expressions of American patriotism or regionalist loyalty (except, of course, to New York City). To judge by the contributors' names, the magazine pretends to cosmopolitan openness; such multiculturalism is displayed also in fiction, reportage, and reviews.

In 2004, for the first time ever, *The New Yorker* endorsed a presidential candidate (Kerry). Four years later it endorsed Obama. At least six covers had connections to the Obamas. Before the election, a satiric drawing showed the couple in the Oval Office, with a portrait of Osama bin Laden on the wall and an American flag burning in the fireplace; the candidate wears a turban and *salwar kameez*, and Michelle, with an Afro, sports camouflage trousers and an assault rifle slung over her back. The cartoon was intended as a *reductio ad absurdum* of charges that there was a connection between Obama and Islam. The drawing caused considerable comment; the editorship, evidently blind, had not imagined that Americans might take it at face value. A post-election cover celebrated the victory by highlighting in moonglow the *O* in the magazine title above a shot of the Lincoln Memorial bathed in light; the cover can be bought in poster form. Another showed Obama interviewing dogs for the position of First Pet. A later cover depicted Mrs. Obama as a fashionista. In December 2009, Obama was shown receiving Santa Claus in what looked like an oval room. The tone of *Talk of the Town* pieces concerning him is that of slavish adulation. Objections to his administration's policies become, in *New Yorker* terms, "demonization" or a result of "disinformation." It is significant that, in contrast, the cover of February 1, 2010, depicting him in three panels walking on water, then sinking in the fourth, suggests that he is not quite omnipotent.

Now, *The New Yorker* ownership (Condé Nast Publications) and editors may, obviously, do what they want, as long as revenues hold up; and, unless they fear repercussions, advertisers generally support "inclusiveness" (surely, they will sell to anyone). Harold Ross, the first editor, declared that the magazine was "not edited for the old lady in Dubuque." No, but its readers were discriminating, and it was not disgusting and could be left, for instance, in a dentist's waiting room. Alas, now, the joke is on us. What was an eminent weekly, featuring notable writers (for example, E.B. White, James Thurber, Joseph Mitchell, William Trevor, Roger Angell), has become awful (though of course it is not all bad, and well-done articles still appear). Ezra Pound's assertion that a nation atrophies and declines if its literature declines is apposite. Human beings spent untold millennia developing what can be called civilization and, then, high culture. Are we to discard it all, perverted creatures who destroy what is best?

The worst aspect of the whole matter is that *The New Yorker*'s claim to being the acme of culture is founded, in a way. Gutter and infantile tastes prevail among American consumers of print, electronic media, and entertainment; and the prevailing "inclusiveness" rules out few behaviors and celebrates iconoclasm. Dropping names of New York and Hollywood "celebrities" and winking at coarse, illegal, and perverted behavior, today's *New Yorker* snobs are right in fashion. Eustace Tilley (as the figure with the monocle was named) should drop his eyeglass, take off his dress clothes, mouth a few obscenities, and get cool.

Catharine Savage Brosman is the poetry editor for Chronicles.

Shawn Kelley

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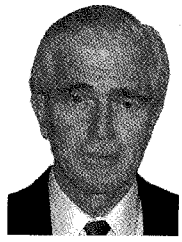
The White Ribbon
Produced by Canal+ and Wega Film ◆
Written and directed by Michael Haneke ◆
Distributed by Sony Pictures Classics



A Cold and Distant Mirror

GERMAN DIRECTOR Michael Haneke loves to sneer at his middle-class patrons. In *Funny Games* (1997, remade in the United States in 2007) and *Caché* (2005), his affluent characters are shown to be at once odious and craven. In his latest effort, *The White Ribbon*, we discover they're natural Nazis too. And for this enlightenment, Haneke has been honored by bourgeois saps around the world, including the saps at that most bourgeois of redoubts, the Golden Globes, who have hailed *Ribbon* as 2009's best foreign film.

Haneke's thesis is that fascism took hold in 20th-century Germany because the nation's seemingly respectable citizenry tolerated child abuse, female subjugation, and sexual repression—especially sexual repression. To make his case, he takes us back to 1913 and dramatizes a series of lurid fictional events besetting Eichwald, a farming village in northern Germany. We are to understand the hamlet was feverish with perversity and malcontent on the eve of World War I.

The narrative is told through the eyes of a village schoolteacher. "I'm not sure if the story I'm about to tell you corresponds to what actually took place," he begins. "I can only remember it dimly. I know a lot of the events only through hearsay." This is a strange way to begin his account, especially since he also insists that, whatever the events were, they unquestionably contributed to Germany's self-destructive course in the years following—a flight of deductive reasoning worthy of the schoolmaster's supremely speculative countryman, Georg Hegel.

Once the teacher has put forth his foggy claim, we're shown Eichwald artfully rendered by Haneke's luminous black-and-white cinematography—clearly the best aspect of his film. He has revealed in interviews that he shot in color and then drained the film stock of its hues to give his story an air of remoteness in time. This certainly works, but it seems an odd choice given that he unmistakably wants his narrative to affect our thinking about the present. Then again, perhaps not. There are indications that he doesn't want us to think too closely about actual history. His story is not a recreation of an historical moment but the ideological deployment of a useful example.

EICHWALD IS PRESENTED as a once-quiet feudal community presided over by an emotionally disengaged baron content to let the villagers fulfill their duties under the guidance of his steward. Then suddenly, the village is plunged into confusion and recrimination by a series of odd accidents and crimes, beginning with the local doctor being thrown from his saddle when his horse stumbles on a nearly invisible wire that someone has strung across the path to his home. Shortly afterward, a woman falls to her death through the rotten floor planks in the baron's sawmill. Then someone abducts the baron's four-year-old son. The boy is rescued, but only after he's been beaten and hung upside down from a barn rafter. Someone leaves a nursery window open, perilously exposing an infant to the frigid night air. A suspicious fire burns down the baron's barn. These and other untoward incidents set the community into an orgy of suspicion. Who is responsible? Haneke never answers this question definitively. Instead, he arranges matters so that we're led to believe the village children are clandestinely striking back at the adults for routinely oppressing them. As we slowly discover, these adults—nearly every one a hypocritical monster—deserve what they get.

Take the doctor. He seems to be a respectable widower, but it turns out that he is given to satisfying his sexual needs with his devoted housekeeper. Disgusted with himself for succumbing to his desires, he makes the poor woman pay for her efforts to please him. After their joyless trysts, he treats her with undisguised contempt. Meanwhile, he's perfectly at his manly ease regularly molesting his 14-year-old daughter.

A different kind of abuse is taking place in another part of town. The village's Lutheran pastor rules his home with severe propriety. When his children fail to live up to his standards, he insists they wear white ribbons on their arms to remind them of the innocence they have lost. Having become suspicious of his 12-year-old son, he interrogates the boy regarding masturbation. After playing dumb for several agonizing and thoroughly humiliating minutes, the boy tearfully admits that, yes, he's a wanker. His father takes the obvious measure, tying the boy's hands to the bed rails at night to defend him against the tempter. Then there's the baron's steward, who keeps his kids in bounds by beating them to the floor and kicking them vigorously—despite the shrill pleas of his wife.

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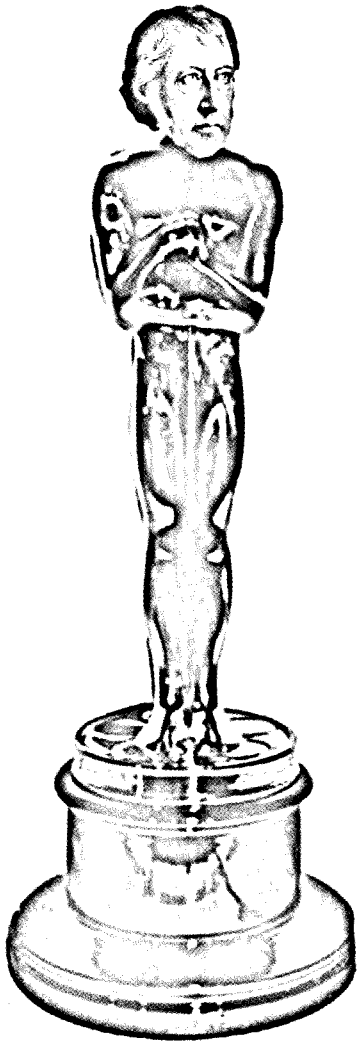
We are made to feel it's pointless to worry about which child did what, since they all suffer from such ghastly parenting. It's enough to know the repressed, deeply unhappy parents have so deformed their offspring that the kids will return the favor by secretly attacking them. They're all sadistic Nazis in waiting.

For people of Haneke's persuasion, repression is always the primary explanation for human iniquity. They take it as axiomatic that all societal ills spring from frost-bound loins. But this logic can hardly explain the horrors that happened in Russia, where, shortly after the events depicted in Haneke's film, the Bolsheviks strove to inaugurate a regime in which sexual repression would be swept into history's famous dustbin. Marriage was to be revamped, if not eliminated, and men and women would be free to disport themselves as they saw fit. Should children follow in the train of such activities, they would be provided for by the understanding state. The argument among not a few red visionaries ran thus: If folks were freed from the bourgeois trammels of romantic courtship, they would satisfy their sexual needs intelligently. Best of all, relieved of their sexual tensions, people would become better workers. No more would they waste time and emotional energy mooning over unattainable loved ones. They would couple unsentimentally with whomever was at hand and be fresh for the factory or office the next day. What a glorious future lay ahead for a populace liberated from sexual repression!

Unfortunately things didn't work out quite like that. I wonder if Haneke will ever come to dramatize this moment in history. It certainly seems more relevant to our time than the distant mirror he has held up in this film. ◆



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Taki Theodoracopulos

Entangled

THIRTY-NINE YEARS AGO this spring I was in Vietnam, busy sending nonstop dispatches back home about how well the war was going for the good guys. When the North Vietnamese took Quang Tri in the north a year later and were about to attack Hue, Bill Buckley sent me a cable asking for 1,000 words on whether Hue could hold out this time. In 1968 the old imperial city had fallen to the Viet Cong, and every priest, doctor, and community leader had been slaughtered. The Marines had retaken it at great cost, and now 40 NVA divisions were rumored to be advancing from the north. I caught a flight from Da Nang on a Chinook and was there in no time. Everyone was on edge, but the attack never materialized. I cabled my copy announcing the end of the war and pronouncing victory for Uncle Sam and the South Vietnamese republic. Bill sent me a nice telegram telling me that he was happy to see me leave that "miserable place" and looking forward to a piece about Americans in Paris. Three years to the day of the Hue nonevent, Bill rang me in Athens and asked if I could get back into Saigon as soon as possible. I rushed to the South Vietnamese consulate, where I had contacts, but in the four days it took for the visa to come through, there was no more Saigon and no more South Vietnam.

Well, the United States never understood the realities in Vietnam, and she does not understand the realities in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Iran, and so on. Which means that, as Uncle Sam and his few Western allies gear up once again for a new round of fighting terrorists, they will have as little effect as they have had the last eight-and-a-half years since September 11.

Here are the facts, this time without the American embassy's brainwashing of 39 years ago: Iraq is a disaster, the surge a failure, and Bush's exercise in nation-building a total washout. No one doubts America's ability to overwhelm other countries with her military might. But that is not the same as using U.S. troops as part of a larger strategy to solve political problems. Fixing Iraq has always been more about politics than about military matters. An ignorant George W. Bush followed Winston Churchill's folly, when, as colonial secretary in 1920, he created an artificial country, forcing three radically different peoples to combine under a single ruler. Both Churchill and Bush were under the sway of Zionists—the former for money (he was deeply in debt and was lent money by Jewish bankers); the latter influenced by the neocons of his administration.

AS I WRITE THIS, bombings and terrorism are rife. The upcoming elections are a farce, as more than 500 prominent Sunni candidates have been disqualified by the ruling Shia–dominated Maliki government. The militias have not been disarmed, and the local Kurdish army, the Peshmerga, is holding the north separate. The whole endeavor of the surge—the political, economic, and military rapprochement between the major Iraqi groups—has conspicuously failed.

Obama relies on hypnotic language that can be applied as easily to Somalia or Yemen as to Afghanistan. It conjures nightmares of failed states and offers remedies of nation-building and counterinsurgency. It assumes that Afghanistan is predictable. It is not. Afghan tribal groups lack the coherence of even Iraqi Sunni tribes. There are no mass political parties, and the Kabul government lacks the legitimacy, the base, and the strength of the Iraqi administration. It is a corrupt regime that has enriched itself through the narco-trade and Uncle Sam's billions. The Taliban portrays the Kabul government as U.S. slaves and exploits the religious resistance that the West fostered in the 1980's against the Soviets. What is needed to defeat the Taliban is a state, but you cannot build a state without defeating the Taliban. The United States and NATO are seen as an infidel occupying force, and Washington is whistling Dixie if it thinks otherwise. The Afghan military lacks the literacy levels to administer a modern army; its loyalties are suspect at best; and it pads its battalions with ghost soldiers, whose paychecks from Uncle Sam go straight into the pockets of corrupt commanders.

Yemen is yet another disaster. President Saleh's government is corrupt, unable to keep tribal leaders happy, and the country is ripe to go the way of Somalia. Yemen is a family corporation that is bleeding red ink. Saleh's first priority is to stay in power and to be succeeded by his son. End of story, as they say.

SO, WHAT IS TO BE DONE? Easy. Get the hell out of foreign entanglements, bring the troops home, tell Israel and the neocon press to go to Hell, and think of what the country can do for its own people for a change. ◆

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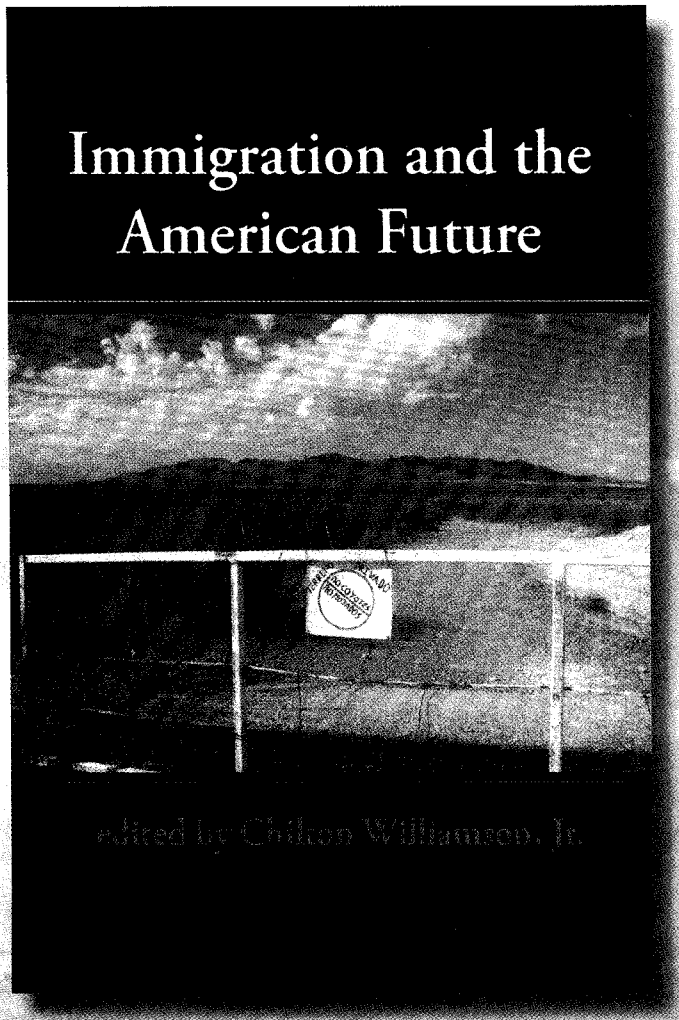

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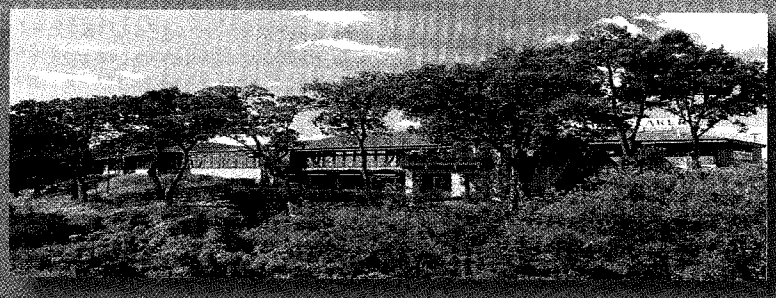

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